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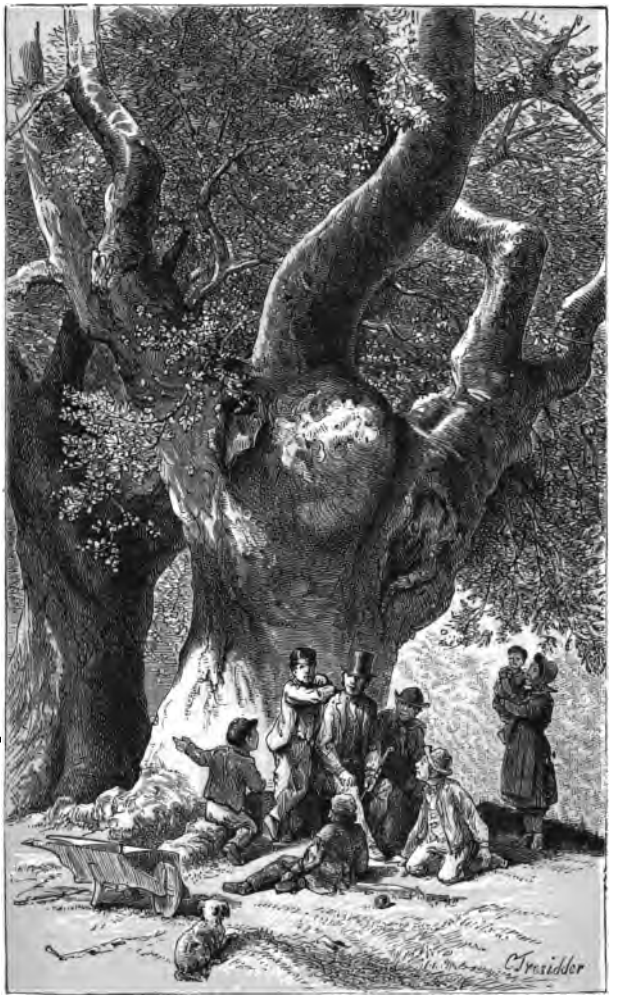
MISTER HORN

AND HIS FRIENDS.



ON A SUMMER'S EVENING ONE MIGHT COME UPON A GROUP UNDER A SHADY TREE, AND THERE AMIDST A LOT OF DELIGHTED YOUNGSTERS WOULD FIND MISTER HORN ENTERTAINING THEM WITH A STORY —Les Anne 3.

MISTER HORN

AND HIS FRIENDS:

GIVERS AND GIVING.

BY

MARK GUY PEARSE.

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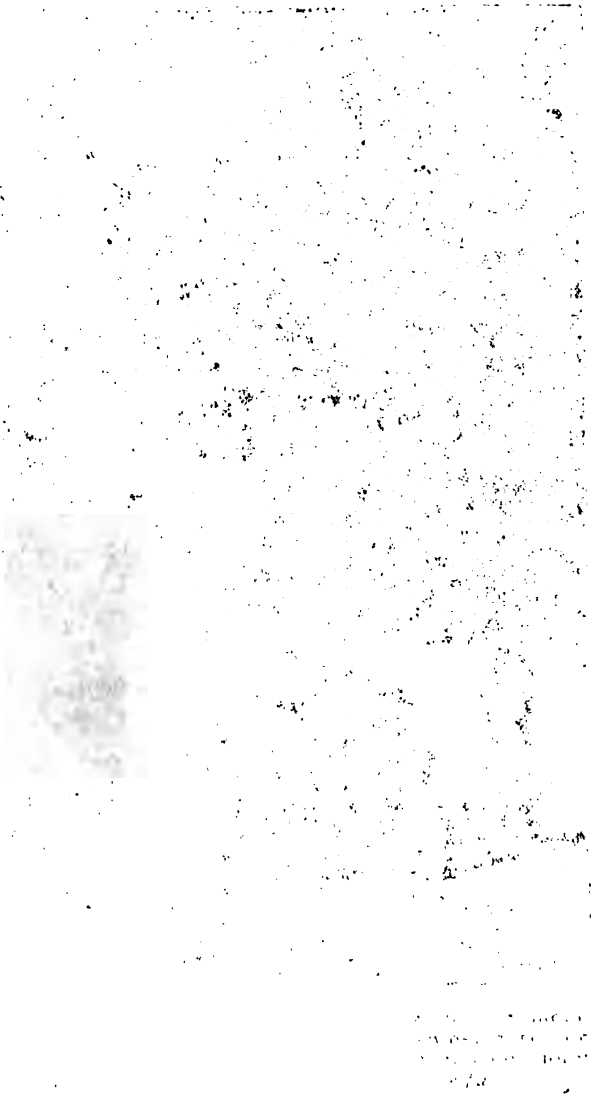


MISTER HORN

AND HIS FRIENDS;

OR,

GIVERS AND GIVING.

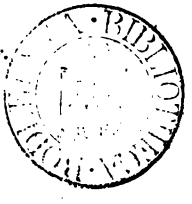
BY

MARK GUY PEARSE,

AUTHOR OF "DANIEL QUORM," "SERMONS FOR CHILDREN," ETC

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

Illustrated by C. Tresidder.



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TO

Frederick Howard, Esq., J.P.,

OF BEDFORD,

WHO, AMID PRESSING CLAIMS OF BUSINESS,
EVER AFFORDS TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST,
WHAT IS SO MUCH MORE THAN GIFTS OF MONEY,
HIS CONSTANT INTEREST, HIS TIME AND HIMSELF,
THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED WITH MUCH
LOVE AND RESPECT

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Mister Horn and his Friends.

CHAPTER I.

Mister Horn

MISTER HORN—the Mister to be written in full. It belonged to the name just as much as the Horn.

Everybody called him Mister. Even his wife said it as if it were his christened name. He was indeed the only Mister in the village, as there was but one squire and one parson and one doctor.

How he came to be known by this honourable

distinction was certainly not suggested by his appearance—a little sharp wiry man, with a quick kindly eye, a mouth well shut, short legs walking so fast that they seemed always afraid of being left behind; carelessly dressed, yet everything about him looking like a part of the man himself, from his short-bowed neckcloth, to the strong unpolished walking-stick. A sort of compressed man. You felt that there might have been a good deal more of him fairly enough, but nature had dried him and packed him up small that he might not be in the way. And who can deny that a man's usefulness is largely dependent on his size? Your long men are mainly ornamental, and accordingly find their place in uniform, either in the army or out of it. Your big stout men are the "Newfoundlands" of us human creatures, lumps of gentle goodness who go wagging benevolently through life. It is your terrier that does most good—amongst men as amongst dogs—sharp-eyed, sharp-eared, sharp-tongued, and if needful, sharp-toothed; quick to smell a rat. Mister Horn was precisely that. Never in the way and good for a hundred things, if you took him right. If you didn't, he was a terrier still—he bristled and showed his teeth.

Mister Horn had begun life as a farm labourer—literally *begun* life, for as soon as he could make any noise he had been sent out to scare the birds

from the corn, and as soon as he could reach up to the bridle he had led the glossy cart horses to water. His sixty years had been full of progress, turning his hand to one thing after another, and prospering in all—woodman, gardening, bricklaying, building, he had at length reached a good position as steward.

The Mister was probably a tribute of respect paid to his prosperity; it was no deference exacted by his manner or exclusiveness. As plain in life as ever, free and friendly with the poorest, the children trotted along by his side, looking up for a smile and a nod; the boys stopped him for a moment to fling their peg-top, or to have a turn at marbles; and on a summer's evening one might come upon a group under a shady tree, and there amidst a lot of delighted youngsters would find Mister Horn entertaining them with a story.

He was useful, too, as he was beloved. As a Methodist he had many opportunities of religious work, and here as in the visible world of brick and mortar, he turned his hand to most things, and what he did at all, did well. He was the "leader" of the Sunday morning class in that village "Society," and it numbered well on for forty members—too large some folks said, but nobody was willing to leave it. Superintendent of the school that met in the afternoon, Local-preacher

in the evening, and sick visitor all the week round, Mister Horn had, as he said, far too much else to do to grumble. "That takes more time than a'most anything else that I know, for I never knew a grumbler yet that ever had a moment to do any good with." This remedy for grumbling was worn to the patness of a proverb, and was a formidable weapon with which he usually came down upon anybody who was disposed to come fault-finding to him. "Look here, dear friend, get you away and do something—for pity's sake do something. Do some good somewhere. Cart wheels grumble and creak sometimes for want of grease, but very often it is for want of work—and you'll never give over creaking and grumbling till you do something." Heaven itself with Mister Horn was a place of eternal and incessant work.—"And I count that that's the brightest bit of heaven's joy that there *they serve Him day and night in His Holy Temple—day and night.*" "I know that there will be no grumblers there because they are all too busy. They have got so much to do that it keeps them always singing."

Mister Horn had overtaken Bill Smith. Bill Smith was a big broad-shouldered blacksmith with a face red, radiant, and honest, such as comes only of a good conscience, plain living, and healthy toil. Moreover Bill was Mister Horn's favourite

disciple and one of his best friends, so they walked up the hill together toward the village where they lived. The sun was setting, throwing their long shadows over the hedge and into the clover field beyond. The clear air was full of singing, every bird taking its part in the evening hymn. The banks were rich with fern and flower, with soft green mosses and dark creeping ivy. This scene of happy contentment had suggested the conversation. Mister Horn began it. He had stayed to hear the birds, and after listening a minute or two had interpreted their gratitude by this passage:

"*Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*" Then after a moment's pause he had started his favourite topic,—"The good Lord loves to give, Bill."

"Aye," said Bill, "He does that, Mister Horn, bless His holy Name."

"And nobody has got much of His likeness about them if they don't like to do the same," continued Mister Horn in his sharp jerking decisive style.

"And yet 'tis strange what a hindrance it was to me when I first set out. I was always thinking o' what religion would cost. I thought I must seek the Lord and join 'long with His people, but the devil kept tellin' me that it would cost so much. Why I very soon found that religion saved me four times so much as ever it cost."

"I do wish the grumblers would think of it in that way, Bill," jerked out Mister Horn. "Why there's Sally Green, the silly creature—before her husband got converted she used to reckon herself lucky if she got half Jack's wages and only a slight thrashing beside; and now that he brings it all home, and is a decent fellow and a good husband, she goes grumbling at what he gives to the Lord's cause."

"There's a heap of strange things in the world," said Bill, half to himself, "but there ain't a many more stranger nor that is."

Mister Horn stopped. With his left finger and thumb he took Bill's sleeve, his right hand holding up the plain ash stick that he carried. It was evident that Mister Horn was going to be impressive. This was always his preparation for something emphatic.

"Bill,"—there was a solemn pause, the stick meanwhile suspended, "If-folks-saw-this-matter-in-the-right-light-the-church-would-have-enough-to-convert-the-world." Down like lightning came the stick, and away went the short legs at a tremendous pace.

This was Mister Horn's hobby. There was nothing that he thought about, talked about, prayed about or preached about, so much as this duty of giving. Many people, very many people, said that he

rode this hobby to death. Well, Mister Horn was always mounted on it, it is true, and ready to start. But on the other hand it must be admitted that these very many people were peculiarly nervous, and its most playful neighing or the mere sounds of its hoofs in the veriest jog-trot, filled them with terror and made them rush for shelter and defence from the furious rider. It was literally Mister Horn's soul that delivered itself in these words. He stopped at the end of twenty paces or so, while Bill leisurely came up with him.

"It seems to me that half the folks would do their duty right enough if they only saw it," said Bill, quietly. "You see they don't think about it, Mister Horn."

"Don't think about it, Bill!" cried Mister Horn; "of course they don't, and that makes it so much the worse for them. Folks think that if they can only explain a thing that it's just the same as excusing it. Why all the mischief in the world comes from not thinking. What have people got head-pieces on their shoulders for except to think about things? Why anybody would think that folks had got figure-heads like ships have 'em for nothing but show, as to their thinking about giving. But they can think about other things quick enough. They can think about *getting*, Bill, and about *keeping*, and about everything else except about giving."

"That's true enough," said Bill.

"And then they ought to think about it, Bill, they ought to. Surely it ought not to be anything so very wonderful that folks should think of the loving Father who gives them all that they have got. He gives them the health and strength and sense to get bread with, and they think they do it all of their own selves. They know better when they get on their backs with a fever. Then they know. But 'tis a pity that we can't learn our A B C without going into the corner for it, and getting a smart tap or two with the rod. I often think of what it says about the disciples—*they considered not the miracle of the loaves*. That's the miracle that folks generally overlook to-day, and the wonder is that the Lord doesn't let us feel the pinch o' famine oftener, that we may know where it comes from. God's stream o' mercies has got to run shallow sometimes that we may hear it brawling, and begin to think about where the fulness comes from. Just let a man sit down and ask himself *how much he has got that God could take away*, and he'll begin to look at things in a different way then—there's eyes, and ears, and health, reason, character, home, family, work, wages. And let a man think how the Lord keeps His hand upon them, and could take them away in a minute, and I think he'd be all in a hurry to bring in the

tithes to the Lord's house then. There's Jim Niggardly, with his coal and timber stores,—twenty years agone that man got his twelve shillings a week, and now he is getting his five hundred a year. He lives better,—I mean he eats and drinks better, and he dresses better,—he spends five shillings on himself where he used to spend one. Well, that's no harm as I told him to his face, if *he'd give five shillings where he gave one.* Not a half-penny more can you get out of him for the Lord's work. If he hasn't thought about it he has had *my* thoughts about it, plain enough."

Bill nodded his head as much as to say that he had no doubt about that. Mister Horn had a talent for giving men his thoughts, and it was practised to perfection.

Here they reached the cross roads that ran to the two parts of the village of Tattingham, and here the companions parted with a cheery good evening. Bill with his bag on his shoulder went whistling down the hill between the leafy hedge, where we shall follow him by-and-bye. Mister Horn kept along the level highway that passed by his house, talking earnestly to himself as he went. What he thought of and what it led to, we must leave to another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

We go home with Mister Horn.

A FEW yards from the cross road was Mister Horn's house. If Dante's vision had shown him men and women transformed into houses (married folks of course into one house) instead of into trees, this house was exactly what Mister Horn and his better-half would have come to.

It faced the highway with clean windows, notably clean, and spotless blinds always faultlessly even. The two yards of garden between the house and the highway was enclosed by iron railings, black and sharp pointed. The little iron gate in the middle was always fastened and locked, except on very

great occasions. From the gate to the front door reached two yards of whitened stones, never soiled. The spirit of the whole front gathered itself up in the face that peered from the shining brass knocker, a polished face haughty and stern, conscious that nobody trifled with it,—no tramp ever lifted it for his single knock, no bungling messenger rapped at it by mistake. The evergreens, too, in the strip of garden were in keeping with the rest—they grew thick-leaved and sombre, as if they did their duty seriously and knew it; they were never guilty of any spring freaks, and had no patience with the gadding butterflies and the likes of them.

This is what Mistress Horn would have turned to.

At the side of the house was a little wicket-gate; it fell back at the gentlest push, and was never secured with more than a bit of string that went round the post. A short passage led to the homely side door that opened into the kitchen, where a cheery fire smirked and blinked a welcome to all comers—the front-room grates had ornamental shavings. A tall-backed, comfortable old chair stood at one side of the fire-place. On the mantle-piece above amongst the polished brass were little odds and ends of Mr. Horn's. The smell of sweet-herbs greeted one from the paper bags; the well-wrapt hams quickened one's appetite, and between the bars that stretched from two oak beams peeped

sundry sticks and spuds. All here was cosy, homely, and snug.

This personified Mister Horn. And as the two parts suited each other, so well did his better-half suit Mister Horn. Tall, handsome, and somewhat stately in her ways, folks said that she was proud; but those who knew her best felt that she was the very woman for the free and easy, the careless and irregular, Mister Horn. With her everything was serious;—duty was the whole ten commandments, the law and the prophets; and duty meant hard work, almost uneasy cleanliness, and keeping oneself for the most part to oneself. Careful and thrifty, to her common sense and quick discernment Mister Horn's industry was indebted for his success in life; and if he sometimes gave with a hint that she shouldn't know of it, it was through her good management that he had so much to give. Indeed, if the truth were all told, he owed the very "Mister" itself to her ways, and to the respectable look that she always gave to things.

By eight o'clock in the evening supper and prayers were over. In those parts civilization had not reached that pitch of folly that eats heartily at ten, and then with the digestion at full work, goes to bed to *rest*. Now, seated in his high-backed chair, was the time that Mister Horn loved a chat.

The sun itself has spots, and Mister Horn was not perfect.

Mister Horn was *not* perfect we have said. He *smoked*, and aggravated the fault, as his better-half explained to visitors: "I shouldn't mind so much if he'd take a clean white pipe, but that short black thing is so very common looking. I tell him it's disgraceful." Yet here too they suited each other. The front rooms were shuttered and locked, whilst the cozy kitchen sat up with the blinking fire, and the purring cat. In other words the better-half retired early—then Mister Horn smoked his pipe in peace.

Now he would tell of himself—How he was a little fellow when the sad tidings reached England that the heroic Dr. Coke had died on his way to India, and had been buried at sea. He heard of the young missionaries who had gone with him, left to land among strangers in that strange country far away, and the story filled the lad's heart with grief for them. Very poor, he could do little, but that little he could and would do with all his might. Rising before daybreak he went out to sweep the roads, and thus to raise a few half-pence for the poor missionaries. No contribution was ever more hardly earned or more willingly given than the "small sums" of this little subscriber.

In early life he got converted.

In his case conversion meant the breaking in of a wonderful love upon his cold and lonely life. It was a love that lifted him right out of his hardships and poverty. It made the blue Heaven bend over him in tender care. It sent the sun to shine for his joy, and the cooling breeze for his refreshing. Away in the lonely fields this love brought him a constant communion and an abiding gladness; and when he came home to his poor lodgings this love was father and mother and brother and all to him. So with all the generosity of boyhood, he counted it his greatest delight as much as his sacred duty to testify his gratitude for such wondrous love in any way he could. Thus early the truth had burned its way into his innermost being.—*The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me.* From the first he began to think about the claims of God's work. His favourite maxim was this: *A man ought to think as much about giving as about getting.* And thus early he put it into practice. He has told us that in those days flour was at war prices—a phrase happily unknown to this generation. He earned only six shillings a week, and out of that he had to pay for lodging as well as living. But whatever else went short, he felt that he must acknowledge the goodness of the Lord who gave him all that he had. He took the old Methodist rule as the limit *downwards,* not *upwards*—"Every member contri-

butes one penny weekly (unless he is in extreme poverty); and one shilling quarterly." And he felt that his giving was none the less acceptable because it cost him much. He often referred to it, in later times. "There's one thing that lots of good people never will know in this world—and 'tis one o' them that we shan't know anything about in Heaven itself, the joy of really pinching yourself to give. I often think that *that is the blessed thing about being hard up when you do give—then you feel it.*

It was with a merry laugh that he would tell the young members how that when he had been at the Class-meeting three or four times he said one evening, "Put me down, please, for a penny a week." The leader looked at me through his spectacles and opened his mouth wide, and after a minute or two said, 'What!' as if he were quite frightened."

"A penny a week, Sir," I said, putting down the money for each evening that I had been at Class. The leader was what you might call a common sort of a man, for they are the *commonest* sort of people that I know,—he thought that the less he could give the better, and if he could do without giving at all, it would be better still. Just as if the Lord *did not see what was left behind*—and just as if He never said, Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. The man was in good work and had no family, and yet a penny a week was all that

he gave. It looked so bad for a lad like I was to give so much, and it quite shocked him.

"You can't afford it, Jim, you know you can't," he said. "Put it down, Sir," I replied, "put it down. There it is, and there it will be as long as ever I've got the love of Jesus in my heart."

Soon after that came the time for the renewal of the quarterly tickets. The leader headed the list with what Mister Horn used to refer to as a "beggarly threepenny-bit!" "Why the fellow spent twice as much in the week on tobacco," he would say indignantly, as if interrupting himself, "Sixpence for smoke and threepence for the work of God!"

Well, the minister went through the names, and they all sang to that low key that had been pitched, till they came to my name. Then what did the leader do but leans over and whispers to the minister that I was young and could not give anything, and that he had better not ask me. The minister nodded his head and took up the Hymn-Book.

"Please, Sir, I love God too," I said. "Why mayn't I give anything?"

The minister looked at me kindly, and said, "Brother Skimes tells me that you can't afford anything."

"The rule says a shilling at least, Sir, except in extreme poverty and that isn't any of us, I am sure."

"'A shilling!' cried the leader, and he jumped off his seat as if some one had pricked him. I think, perhaps, I had. 'A shilling! you know you can't do it.'"

"There's the money, Sir," and I put the shilling on the table. "I would afford it somehow, Sir, however it might pinch me." And I looked at Brother Skimes so much as to say, "though it should even put my pipe out."

"Ay, I used to pinch myself too," continued Mister Horn. "More than once I've gone on dry bread, and then done so much as any of 'em. Now and then I used to buy a lot of broken herrings for sixpence, and then I had a bit of a relish. You know they say that there's nothing like bitters to give you an appetite, and it is when you give away what you want that you enjoy what's left. You try it—take and give away half your dinner: and then the other half! bless ye, the Lord Mayor of London might envy it. If anybody wants to taste a bit o' real joy, let 'em just go and do that. I've often turned it over in my mind that love is real true love when it has got a bit of real, hard, pinchin' sacrifice about it, and not till then. Kindness and pity will give you, perhaps, what it thinks it can do without, but love gives everything. *He spared not His own Son*—that is love. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.*

Kindness and pity will send the scraps and bones out to the shivering beggar at the door. But love brings him in and gives up its place and its plate, and will stand behind, waiting and helping. Ah, that's how the blessed Lord treated us when we came home from the far country perishing with hunger. No old cast-off clothes—but the best robes. No scraps, all bones and crusts, but the fatted calf. No pitiful words, but *Himself.* His arms about the neck, and his kiss upon the cheek, and all his heart to welcome us. But we, when He comes to ask anything of us, we keep Him waiting at the door for an answer, and then we send Him out our miserable scrapings, just what we think we can spare without feeling it. The wonder is that He doesn't come and take it all by force He who is the King and Lord of all, and who has only put us in as His poor stewards. Depend upon it, we don't know much about love, if love don't pinch us a bit now and then.

CHAPTER III.

Shows us Something more of Mister Horn.

THUS Mister Horn began. Little wonder the man prospered. He had a shrewd way of explaining how he managed to get on :—

"You see I said that I *would* give somehow. Well that brought me into a trick o' keeping both eyes open to see how I could pick up a shilling a week more wages, so I kept bettering myself all along. Mind you, I didn't do it for myself. I did it because I felt I couldn't anyhow do enough for Him who was so good to me. But I found the more I gave away the more I had to give. It's the same

all through God's world. When the poor prodigal lad lived to please himself he soon came to grief, he had spent all, and began to be in want. But when he'd come home and gave up thinking about himself, and wanted to serve his father and to please him, why then he got the best robe and the fatted calf, and began to be merry—*began* to be merry; ay, that's a right kind of merrymaking that needn't ever have an ending, when a man lives to please his Father and to serve Him. Let a man count that he's the *Lord's hired servant*, and he'll get good wages—enough and to spare. But let a man count that he's his own master, and that he'll do what he likes with his own, and that man'll have a discontented servant and a bad master all in one. I've spent money in a goodish many ways, and I reckon that there's only one way that I spent and never wished a farthing of it back again—that's what I've given to the Lord's work."

Mister Horn's greatest achievement in the way of giving was when the new chapel was built at Gippington, the Circuit town.

He refused to make any promise. He would do what he could, he said. Folks knew that this was not a hypocritical way of doing nothing, such as it is very often; indeed they had already settled among themselves what he would do.

"He's good for five pounds," said Jim Niggardly.

"He's good for ten," said others with larger hearts that measured him better.

But his old friend Chaffer shook his little head at both and said, with husky, broken voice, "There's no knowin' what he's good for, if he on'y get it in his mind,—he's a wonder is Mister Horn." Old Friend Chaffer was right.

Mister Horn turned it over, prayed about it, and at length made up his mind as to what he would do.

The passage on which he had been preaching lately kept ringing in his head, like the music of a sweet song, *The Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me.* It was as he walked home one Sunday evening with this text filling his heart and soul that it occurred to him. The clear frosty air made the November sky to sparkle brilliantly with the stars, forcing him to consider the heavens, as he came along in his lonely walk. He thought of their number—of their vastness. He thought how that night after night they had looked down upon the changeful, wearied world, the same as when Abraham had read in them the expression and seal of the promise—the same as when David had watched them from the midst of his flock and wondered at the Lord's mindfulness of man—the same as when they hung over Him Who in the still evening passed up to the mountain-top, and with them as

His only witnesses spent the night in prayer. Then adoringly he thought of the Hand that made them. "*He giveth the stars,*" said Mister Horn to himself. "Ah, how He loves to give—He might have doled one here and another there. But that wouldn't be like *Him.*" And he stood and looked overhead; then slowly around him, "Millions of them! millions," he cried. "O, my God and Father, what a great giving Thine is. Right royal! Nay, never a king gave so, 'tis only like Thyself,—Thou lovest to give, only giving such millions could satisfy Thee."

Then with deepening emotion and intenser adoration, he thought how far away in the infinite space was the throne of that glorious Lord who is the light of sun and moon and star. With a new meaning that thrilled him came the text of the evening—HE *loved me, and gave* HIMSELF *for* ME. *Himself* for *me!* he repeated aloud, *Himself* for me!" And grateful love filled his soul, and overflowed in tears of adoring joy.

This emotion was yet lingering within him as he thought suddenly of the new chapel. What should he "render to the Lord for all His benefits?" He had saved some little money, should he give that? No, that would not do—he wanted to feel that he was somehow giving himself. *He loved me and gave Himself for me,*—this was the wonderful love

by which his heart was prompted, and such a motive was not easily satisfied. He had walked some distance in perplexity, and now was coming near to his own house. At length it was evident that Mister Horn had "got it into his mind," as old Chaffer put it. The pause in the path by which he was crossing the field, the uplifted ash stick, the moment's suspense, then the vigorous thrust and the rapid strides forward announced some great decision. Mister Horn would live on what he had saved, and for one year would give all that he could get to the Lord. "It'll be like giving myself," he cried, "body, soul, and spirit."

The resolution thus formed was bravely carried out. It was the hardest year of his hard-working life. Neighbours heard him astir at earliest dawn, his friends wondered what made him so miserly of his time. He knew very well that he could keep no secret from his wife, so he told her straight out that night, and then went to sleep before she had sufficient time to object. But all the rest of the village was kept wondering until the end of the year. It was at a meeting for the new chapel that the pent-up secret came out. A subscription was placed in the minister's hand with a paper worded thus:—"*One year's work,* £100. *He loved me and gave Himself for me.* J. H."

"That was the happiest year of my life," Mister

Horn said, whenever he told of it. "You reckon Sunday a good day, because in it you do no manner of work. But there's something better than Sundays, and that's where they rest not day or night from their labours. And I never felt so much like being one of them as I did then. I was sinking a well a good part of the time, and very often I used to think about it down in the still, damp darkness, hearing nothing but the gloomy echoes of my own tools, and now and then a bit o' clay that went splashing into the water sixty feet below, sounding like 'ashes to ashes,' as I stood on the shaking plank. I used to think that they up in their glory, and me down in my well were both doing the same thing for all that we were such a long way off,—we were both working for the same Lord, and we both wanted to do as much as ever we could. That *was* a happy year."

CHAPTER IV.

Introduces us to James Niggardly.

MISTER Horn had one trouble. He thought about it, talked of it, prayed over it and set himself with all his heart to remedy it. That trouble was the afore mentioned Jim Niggardly.

"James Niggardly, Esquire, Stukeville," was the address on his letters, but with Mister Horn he was never anything else than plain Jim. He was by no means what his name led one to expect in appearance—nothing of the traditional Mr. Gripeman or Mr. Money-love; his were not the pinched features, the half-starved withered frame, the thread-

bare coat. Somewhat about the middle height, stout, and rather good-looking, the head thrown back and the hair brushed up to make the most of himself, a gold chain spanning the rounded expanse of waistcoat, the thumbs thrust into the arm-holes—such was James Niggardly's portrait. A large man with a gold chain was the impression he generally made at first. The impression was confirmed when he began to speak. There was a trick of hesitancy and repetition at the commencement of his sentences, and as each sentence began with "I," it came out thus:—

"I, em, I—I—I—eh"

So that one came to think of him as if these five or six "I's" had been rolled into one big man with a gold chain. His signature was "I. Niggardly." There it was in imposing letters on the office door. It stood prominent on the coal-carts, and the railway trucks carried it to and fro in important letters. In fact, the "I" ran through everything, from the big man himself down to the brass seal that lay on the office desk.

He had commenced life in a very humble way, so humble indeed that the "I" had not appeared, and he was only plain Jim, who went selling small quantities of coal from house to house. But the railway came, and then he opened a coal store, to which he kept grafting other branches that all bore

some crop of golden fruit, until it was no secret that he was worth five or six hundred a year.

Worth, I have said; well yes. And yet what did it mean? Of all the truths that men accidentally utter in the phrases of every day, and of all the untruths, there is none more suggestive than this—What is a man *worth?* James Niggardly was worth five or six hundred pounds a year! Well, there was a time when he was worth a good deal more than that —when he was worth more than all the cyphers that you could tack on to it. It was when he was a happy man on thirty shillings a week, and worked hard with his own hands to get it—then James Niggardly was worth more; body, soul and spirit. It was when after the hard day's work, the old horse was made comfortable in the stable, and the somewhat ricketty cart was set up under the shed, and Jim had gone through a process of splashing and blowing, and then all radiant and happy came to fill the kettle, and to look after the dear old mother who could do little else than sit crooning by the fire all day long. It was when he sat down to tell all that he could think of that would interest her, sitting there carefully toasting a bit of bread as a relish for the old lady's tea, afterwards removing the crust for his own more active jaws, whilst the old lady's face gladdened into a pleasant pride at the kindly ways of her Jim. It was when he gathered

with the little company at the prayer meeting, and Heaven honoured him, and men felt that he had power with God and prevailed; it was when he sat in the midst of the Sunday-school class and told them of the loving Saviour until their hearts were moved, and they went home strangely thoughtful and impressed; it was when godly old men and women brightened as Jim dropt in for a bit of prayer, and they pressed him with their bony hands and blest him with their dying lips—*then* he was worth more, tenfold more, a hundredfold more, worth more to God, worth more to himself. What is a man *worth?* Worth miserably little if he is only worth what he has in his pocket, or what he sets down in his income tax paper. You are right to count a man's worth by his gold and robes and luxuries—but let it be by the gold of pure love, by the white robes of truth and meekness, by the delicious luxury of a blameless conscience, of doing good, of blessing others, so only should you count what a God-made man is worth.

But thus estimated, James Niggardly, with his five hundred a year, was a pauper. The very appearance of the man betrayed his bankruptcy. The old look of quiet contentment was gone, and in its place was an anxious and somewhat crafty expression; the kindly ways had changed into an irritable, almost angry tone and manner. His wife

could tell that the humble Jim who courted her some twenty years before, and this James Niggardly, Esquire, were two different men. Sometimes people thought that she sighed for the dear old Jim who used to be—he whose face was often black with coal-dust, and whose cheery voice had gladdened her into many a blush as it sounded through the village street with its cry of "Coal, ho! coal, coal, coal, ho!"

If you wanted him now you would never think of looking for him at the prayer-meeting. True his name was on the class-book as a member of the Society under Mister Horn's care, but only now and then a solitary P broke the long line of A's. Mister Horn read his name every week, but usually the searching look round the room was followed by a sigh. "'A' again" he said, as he turned to his book, and the pencil made three heavy strokes. For Mister Horn always put a capital A,—it was associated in his mind in some roundabout way with a capital offence, and this was a sort of capital punishment.

Sunday still found James Niggardly usually in his place at Tattingham Chapel. There he sat in the one crimson-curtained pew just inside the door, with his wife and three daughters. Even on "collection Sundays" they were all there, each with a threepenny bit—what a pity there are no silver

pennies! James Niggardly, Esquire, himself gave sixpence. Once Mister Horn hoped that the sermon had done him good, for he actually gave a shilling, but at night he made up for it by politely bowing to the plate, so that it came to just the same thing.

Now this James Niggardly, Esquire, of Stukeville, was the greatest hindrance that "the cause" at Tattingham ever had. The old parish squire had been a hindrance when for years he refused the ground for the chapel, but the little Society had prayed about it until they got the land all for nothing. The old parson had been an hindrance when he laid it down that the allotments were to grow only Church potatoes, and that "they who could do without him on Sundays might do without him on Mondays too." He did not even say to them, "Be ye warmed and filled,"—much less suffer their Nonconforming bodies to be comforted by parish blankets and coals, and sundry charities of which he was trustee. In spite of that the little Society kept up its own fire and flourished. But this James Niggardly in the midst was a *real* hindrance. The others after all were outside, but this man seemed to leave the door open for all the bleak winds of Heaven, so that everybody was chilled and miserable. If anything were to be done they all waited for James Niggardly to start it; and

there were so many buts and ifs, so many fault findings and grumblings, so many wretched objections, and when he did give it was "pitched in so low a key," as Mr. Horn said, that it hindered a great deal more than it helped. The fact was that if it had not been for his amiable wife and useful daughters, the sooner he had taken himself clean away, the better would it have been for the "cause" and all belonging to it.

Mister Horn, as he told Bill Smith, had often given James Niggardly a bit of his mind. He had known Jim from a boy, had given him his first start in life, had directed and advised him in all the steps of his growing prosperity, and now he grieved deeply as he saw this root of all evil thus growing and flourishing in his soul. Mister Horn was not the man to shirk the duty, and when he did speak the words were not so rounded and polished as to "glide off like water from a duck's back," as he said. When he spoke it was pointed and well aimed, and it stuck just where he meant it to stick. "Music is all very nice and pretty," he said to an elegant young preacher, "but you know it is the powder and shot that does the work."

The quarter was drawing to a close, and James Niggardly, Esquire, was somewhat in arrears with his class-money. It was no great amount, although it was for thirteen weeks. The noble sum of a

penny a week and a shilling a quarter was all that he owed. Mister Horn, with half as much to live upon, gave a pound for the ticket column, and thirteen shillings filled up the other page. But Mister Horn, folks said, was "a wonder" and remarkably enough in this ambitious world, nobody else coveted a similar distinction.

It was at supper time that Mister Horn called at Stukeville for the money. Everything was very nice; extravagant, he thought, in his simplicity. He would not join them, he would sit by the fire-place until they had finished.

"I don't see, Mister Horn, why I shouldn't enjoy myself," said Jim Niggardly, guessing the visitor's thought, and feeling that the little grey eyes were upon him. "I've worked hard for my money," and he helped himself to a dainty slice.

"Umph!" grunted Mister Horn in reply, and he thought of the penny a-week and the shilling a quarter.

The supper finished, they sat opposite each other in front of the fire. They were alone, and now Mister Horn brought his chair nearer his friend; he liked to *get at a man*, as he called it. He went right to the point at once.

"Look here, Jim, how can you satisfy yourself with giving what you do to the work of God? Two shillings and a penny is all that you give in a

quarter, besides a sixpence that they screw out of you at a collection now and then."

"Ah, times are hard, Mister Horn, times are hard, you know," said Jim, wiping his mouth as he finished his glass of sherry.

Mister Horn's sharp eye followed the hand as it put down the glass. After a minute's silence, he rose to go, and held out his hand, "Well, good night, Jim—good night. My Master wants an answer, for I've come in His name, you know—and I am sure my Blessed Master would never ask for anything from a man who could not afford it, much less would He beg for it. So I'll go home and tell Him that times are hard with Jim Niggardly and that he has got nothing to give. Good night, Jim."

"O, don't be in a hurry, Mister Horn, I didn't mean that exactly. You always take one up so sharp," and Jim was somewhat frightened at returning such an answer.

"I mean it right enough, Jim. There are times when a man can't give what he would like to, and he does right to speak out and say so, whatever folks may say or think. They have got no business to pry into any man's private matters. Jesus gave gifts amongst men, some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, but *He didn't give any beggars*, and I don't believe He wants any either. I like my "Yes," or "No," when I come

in the Master's name, and then I go straight back and tell Him what answer I get. I can leave Him to deal with it then—and He *can* deal with it, Jim. When He sees any heart set upon giving, why He'll send an angel from Heaven if it's only with a mite for a poor widow. And if He sees it kept back and hoarded up, He can deal with it."

And Mister Horn took up the Bible that was lying within reach and opened it at the Book of Haggai—"He can deal with it; listen to this—*Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways. Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, and there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes . . . Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.* They said the times were hard whenever it was for the Lord's house, Jim."

"Really, Mister Horn," said Jim, taking out the two shillings and a penny—"you always do put things in such a dreadful way."

Then Mister Horn changed his tone. "Jim," he cried in a bantering way, "there's one thing that would do you a world of good. Shall I tell you what it is?"

Pausing a moment, Mister Horn went on, "It's just this, to have your butcher's bill for thirteen weeks only come to two shillings and a penny."

"What *do* you mean?" asked James Niggardly, Esquire, looking up with surprise.

"Mean what I say," Mister Horn continued. "No, not the butcher's bill only, but the baker's bill too, and the brewer's bill, ay and the tailor's, the lot of 'em coming to two shillings and a penny! Oh this poor body of thine how it would fare!" laughed Mister Horn, as he thrust his thumb where Jim's ribs should have been. "This proud flesh of thine would come down, eh friend? This broadcloth would look bare, eh? The brewer's supply wouldn't need a dray to bring it, and the baker's bill wouldn't be worth calling for twice. Two shillings and a penny a quarter for Jim Niggardly's body! O, no, no, no," Mister Horn laughed, "two shillings and a penny, that's only for his soul, his soul!" Then Mister Horn spake gravely. "Two and a penny, Jim, for the Bread of Life and the wine of the kingdom, for the white robe and the hope of glory, all for two shillings and a penny!"

"O, but, really," said Jim, annoyed, "it's absurd to put the two things together like that; we don't buy heaven in that style, as if it were sold by the pound or the yard."

"Is it Jim, is it so very absurd?" and Mister

Horn spoke yet more gravely. "*What your body would be on two and a penny a quarter, your soul is more like than I care to see it, Jim.*" Mister Horn laid his hand kindly on Jim's shoulder, "You've starved it, you know as well as I do, starved it till it can hardly get about, starved it till it can't crawl either to prayer-meeting or class-meeting. I knew the time, and you too, when it had decent clothes as ever a soul wore. Kindness, love to God and man—but now it's all rags and tatters, and not so clean as it used to be, eh, Jim? Not so absurd after all. You're starving it for this prosperity of yours, you know it as well as I do. And look ye, Jim Niggardly, ye'll get the worst of the bargain if you gain the whole world and give in exchange for it even this poor starved ragged soul of yours."

Jim was silent. He felt truly enough that it was not so absurd after all.

Mister Horn rose to leave. "Good night, Jim," he said, holding out his hand,—"I came to tell you what I thought as plainly as I could, and I've done it. If you don't see it now, you'll see it all some day, and God grant that it may not be too late in the day to mend."

Then Mister Horn went home to bed, and slept like a man who had done his duty not unkindly. Jim Niggardly went to bed too, but somehow did not rest comfortably.

CHAPTER V.

How Old Jowl got a Dinner.

YET there were some things that James Niggardly, Esquire, would give.

He might have coveted very earnestly the blessing of entertaining angels unawares, so zealously was he given to hospitality. The larger customers left his office door wiping their lips approvingly; and at his table a hearty welcome and more than enough waited for every guest. Nor did he suffer his visitors to overlook his bounty. The wine was urged with the recommendation—"I won't say it's good, but if it isn't, good can't be got for

money;" and the price of luxuries were carefully whispered by him as "between ourselves."

Some said Mister Horn was too strict, some called him pig-headed, and that he believed no one was right but himself. At any rate it was true that, somehow or other, he wouldn't see much virtue in this, nor suffer it to be urged in James Niggardly's defence.

"Hospitable is he—good hearted?" Mister Horn would say, waxing hot and indignant. "That's just what I can't stand about him. If James Niggardly *ground himself* down to a flint stone, if he grudged every penny that he spends, I could understand the man. If he were a scraping, hoarding miser, lean and shrivelled, whose hooked fingers would like to clutch and save the air that other folks breathe, and the sunlight they see by, I could make him out then. The worst of all is that he *can* be good-hearted to himself or to anybody else, except to the loving Father Who gave him all that he has got. He can be hospitable to everybody besides, only he will keep the door shut against the Guest who has stood and knocked, in vain entreating: '*Open unto ME!*'" As he went on, the tone grew more tender until the voice trembled with emotion. "Yes, Jim Niggardly can be generous to everybody except to the Blessed Lord who was rich and for our sakes became poor. To think that he

should grudge anything to Him!" Again Mister Horn spoke angrily, "The man doesn't care for any expense but what goes to God's work. His house, his back, his belly must have themselves waited on and paid for, but God's work must stand out in the cold waiting hat in hand for the scraps that are left. He will spend his money upon his horse and his dog without grudging. But he can't give away a twentieth part of what they cost him without grumbling and growling about it for a whole week. The man must give a dinner to his friends sometimes, or he must be off for a month at the sea-side, and he pays the bills as if it were no very great trouble. But ask him for five shillings for old Jowl! Try and get a guinea out of him for the Sunday-school! Remind him that a shilling is all he gives for his class ticket! Why you'll have a list of dreadful things that would make you fancy the man hadn't a ha'penny to bless himself with. No, I would rather see Jim Niggardly a miser out-and-out, to himself and to everybody else, than see him as he is—a miser to nobody but to the Blessed Lord Who gave him the very breath that's in his nostrils. No, don't talk to me about his hospitality."

And it must be confessed that most people readily obliged Mister Horn in this request.

With these notions so strongly held, it was not

much wonder that Mister Horn did not care to avail himself of Jim's pressing invitations. Often repeated, and very heartily made, they were somewhat bluntly declined.

On one occasion, however, Mister Horn accepted an invitation with a readiness and freedom that were surprising.

He had dropped into the office on business, and as he was leaving, Jim pressed him to remain. "You never come to take dinner with us; you know there is always a knife and fork and the best I can afford—nobody living is more welcome than you are."

It was evident that Mister Horn had just got something "in his mind;" turning suddenly round in the doorway, and coming back again, he struck his stick sharply on the office floor.

"Thank ye, Jim, thank ye," said he, as the little grey eyes twinkled merrily. "You're very kind. It's just the very thing I'm wanting is a good dinner. I'll take it with me, thank you."

Jim knew there was something else coming, and looked enquiringly.

"I'll take it with me, Jim," continued Mr. Horn as he began figuring upon a piece of paper; and then went on interrupting himself as he added his figures—"ninepence and sixpence—you're very kind, Jim—and eightpence—very kind—and nine-

pence more—very kind—and fourpence,"—he paused as he drew a line at the bottom of the paper. "There, Jim, I'm not much of a ready reckoner, but that's about it, as you do things handsome—three shillings—ah, but I'd forgotten the cigars, say two, that's sixpence more—say three shillings and sixpence. Thank ye; I'll take it with me as I'm rather in a hurry."

James Niggardly began to suspect what was coming, but only looked what he thought.

Mister Horn laughed with an honest, child-like merriment, and then renewed his appeal.

"I'm just going to see poor old Jowl; he's as poor as a church mouse, and I should very much like to take him a dinner, so if you'll give it to me I'll be off, Jim,"—and the sentence ended in a laugh like that with which it began.

"Three and sixpence!" said Jim, "really Mister Horn you're always begging—I'm only a poor man—give, give, give—it's nothing but give,"—and he spoke like one who is bitterly wronged.

"O, I'm very sorry, very sorry, I'm sure;" and Mister Horn spoke with an air of apology. "You ask me to take dinner, I accept your offer and want to *take* it, and now you draw back like this. Why, Jim, I certainly thought you meant it."

James Niggardly felt that Mister Horn had

him, and that it was useless to wriggle. As if it had been his very life-blood, he counted three shillings and sixpence into Mister Horn's hand.

"Thank ye, Jim, thank ye," Mister Horn chuckled; "I've enjoyed the dinner very much. It's such a comfort to an old man like me to dine without indigestion, and all that." His voice returned to its more serious tone as he moved towards the door. "Good day, Jim, there's not many things that are better worth the money than old Jowl's blessing—good day, thank ye."

"Well," Mister Horn muttered to himself as he went up the road, "I'm glad that I've got poor old Jowl his dinner; but I can't understand it. Jim would rather have had me, or anybody else who doesn't need a dinner, to dine with him all the week round, than have spent three shillings and sixpence in this way. He'd give you five shillings in meat and drink sooner than give old Jowl one in hard cash. If Jim could only get hold of a prince now he'd ruin himself to get him luxuries—that he would—poor Jim! God help thee, or some day thou wilt hear it spoken,—*I was an hungered and ye gave ME no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave ME no drink. I was a stranger and ye took ME not in, naked and ye clothed ME not; sick and in prison and ye visited ME not . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it*

not to ME. God help thee, Jim—I'll not give thee up yet."

* * * * *

"Really," grumbled James Niggardly, Esquire, as he passed into his comfortable dining-room, "this incessant giving is unbearable; people beg without any conscience." And he was obliged to console himself with a glass of golden sherry.

CHAPTER VI.

More to be desired than Gold.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES" is a familiar phrase.

Everybody says it.

But who believes it?

Perhaps not even you and I, reader, for all our talk about it. Money is so very useful, indeed so essential to doing good. And then poverty is really uncomfortable, and it is so un-influential, so powerless for any beneficence. It is generally ignorant too, and often drunken and dishonest. Why, look at all our town missions and home missions, our Bible-women and tract-distributors—

they are all for the conversion of the poor, until we come to think of that Scripture, "*the poor have the gospel preached unto them,*" as if it meant that nobody else needed it. Look, too, at our common phrases that unconsciously betray the deepest and most general convictions. The man who is getting rich is *doing well,* as if all morality lay in money-making. He who loses money is *doing badly*—and the world reckons it the very worst badness of which men can be guilty.

The religious phrases baptize the same notions with a Christian name:—"Providence smiles upon him"—they are always golden smiles—the man's getting rich. But of him who loses money—the church shrugs its shoulders and shakes its head, and says, half pityingly and half upbraidingly: "*He has gone out of his providential way.*" We test Providence by gold, and measure the Divine favour by the amount of the income. When, my reader, shall we learn the lesson of that Life of lives? The Son of the Highest was called the son of a carpenter. He in whom the Father was well pleased was faint with very hunger. The Well-beloved had not where to lay His head!

She is a lying jade, this deceitful Riches. For years she had whispered to James Niggardly. "You see," she whispered smoothly, "when you have got so much more, how useful you could be,

how *very* useful. Of course, at present, you can't do much, but *then* you will be able to give without stint, and in so many ways to do good." The fair enchantress conjured up a picture in which James Niggardly saw himself amidst his abundance blessed and beloved of all the villagers, busied only with schemes of usefulness, and spending his untroubled leisure in doing good. He saw half the devils of Tattingham cast out by his gold—potent gold, yellow flashing gold, the true magician, the mighty exorcist, whose fetters should bind the Prince of Darkness, and whose influence should bring the "golden age"—what could not its wizardry accomplish?

The wonder is that James Niggardly did not see the lie, ay and feel it too! The balance at the banker's increased each year, each year trade grew, and the returns swelled to higher figures. Yet he was not a tittle the happier, he could not give a penny more, and grudged as much as ever the little he did give. Happier! not he; he was harder to please, he grumbled more constantly, he swaggered a great deal more, his indigestion became more troublesome, while now and then there was an ominous twitching in the great toe—and this was all that riches did for him, the deceitful thing!

And she was as cruel as she was false. James Niggardly was within easy reach of the truest,

ALL WAS BEAUTIFUL WITH THE LEAFINESS OF JUNE.

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purest happiness that ever soul delighted in. If, as he sat in the easy chair, looking out from the dining-room into the pleasant garden, he could have changed places with Mister Horn for an hour, he would have known what true happiness is.

The road from Stukeville to the village passed up the hill, between tall hedges, and here and there between old twisted oaks and stately elms. All was beautiful with the leafiness of June ; the air was sweet with honeysuckle and wild rose and the white flowers of the elder ; hazel branches covered the hedge-top, and from beneath them rose the leafy fern, the plume of the budding foxglove, and all the luxurious tangle of deep grass and trailing leaves, starred by the white or pink, or yellow of clustering wild flowers. The hum of insects filled the lazy noontide, and the twittering of hedge birds, while now and then a flood of melody was poured from the soaring lark. On one side of the road leaped and sang the ceaseless little stream that, bubbling up to light in a delicious spring, round which the mosses hung, formed a tiny crystal pool where the birds stooped to drink, and then went laughing all along its way to the river in the valley below, as if its one good deed sent it rejoicing to the end of its course.

Slowly nature stole Mister Horn's thoughts. He stayed to scent the sweetness, admiring the

beauty lavished round him, until he caught the spirit of gratitude that inspired all things, and he lifted up his heart to bless the good Father; "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; the earth is full of Thy riches!" he muttered. "*Full* of Thy riches;—yes, God doesn't keep His riches to Himself. The earth is full of them. Every little nook is crowded, even this common hedge-row and dusty highway. It's more than all our riches can buy, God's riches that He gives."

Slowly reaching the hill-top, the landscape opened before him. The intense blue sky, the fields and woodland dappled with light and shade chasing each other in leisurely sport, and far away rose the great banks of clouds—God's snowy mountains. "Full of Thy riches," he cried, as he paused, "and all these riches mine!"

A princess welcomed to her adopted home with jubilant music and costliest splendour, with censers breathing delicate perfumes, and the rapturous greetings of a mighty host, would have been of all things most unlike the plain, quaint, busy Mister Horn. And yet it was with such a joy, so full and deep, that he lived each day; and with such a delight in all about him. Nature teemed with ministering spirits that seemed sent forth to minister to him. And well might it be so. Did he not walk in the smile of God—the smile that makes

life's lowliest by-path a triumphant way? And did not leafy arches span it as he passed along, and flowers breathe delicious fragrance? God's own sun illuminated his steps, and the ever sweet and gentle music of the birds attended him. "*Full* of His riches, *full*," he cried; "there is no room for anything more." Ah, James Niggardly, how much wouldst thou have paid down in hard cash to have had for one hour this contentment, this gratitude, this delight?

Near to the hill-top was one of the many clusters of cottages that made up the scattered village of Tattingham. For the most part they stood in groups of three or four, facing the highway, with their gardens flourishing around them. But passing these, Mr. Horn crossed over a stile, and then a few steps along the little path between the green wheat brought him to a dilapidated hovel. It looked as if ashamed of being seen on the highway, it had slunk back thus far out of sight, and had all but thrown itself down in the effort. The disordered thatch, the uneven walls, the one window with its patched and ragged panes; the strip that had been a garden, now a mound of ashes and a wilderness of weeds—it was only by the grossest flattery that these could be known as "Old Jowl's *Cottage*."

It was not a knock that announced Mister Horn's arrival so much as a rattle, as if the loosely hanging

door resented the tap and shook itself crustily. A feeble voice answered, "Come in." Putting his finger through the round hole and lifting the clumsy latch, Mr. Horn stooped under the doorway and passed within.

Fortunately the door was left open, for the air was needed, and the sunlight that slanted across the dusty room was the only pleasant thing in it. The place was just as comfortless as the outside promised, perhaps a trifle dingier. The old man himself was undoubtedly as poor as the proverbial "church mouse" to which Mr. Horn had likened him. Yet, somehow, the first look made one take a fancy to "old Jowl." There was a fresh colour upon his wrinkled cheeks, and a smile that lit up the blue eyes and curled about the corners of the mouth; and when he spoke there was such a cheery contentment in his tone, that one could not help liking him. The sunshine reached just far enough to fall on the old large-type Bible that rested upon his knees, and from its open page the light was reflected upon his face. One felt as if the reflected light were always there, and that the freshness, the smile, and the contented tone grew somehow out of the light from that open page.

"Old Jowl," as everybody called him, had been for years unable to work—crippled with rheumatism, and gradually growing feebler, he could only crawl

THE SUNSHINE REACHED JUST FAR ENOUGH TO FALL ON THE OLD LARGE TYPE BIBLE, THAT RESTED UPON HIS KNEES, AND FROM ITS OPEN PAGE THE LIGHT WAS REFLECTED UPON HIS FACE.—*See p. 50.*

from his bed to the fire-place and back again. His wife had died some years before, and since then he had lived alone. The neighbours looked after him, and with the help of some friends and the parish allowance, he had, he said, "enough to praise God for."

"Well, old friend, how is it to-day?" asked Mister Horn, gently shaking the old man's hand.

"Ah, Mast' Horn, I'm glad to see yeow, bless yir. I knew 'twas yeow when yeow come to the door, and the sound o' yeow like did me good. I'm right glad, I am, right glad;" and the old man looked it too.

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart—and Mister Horn might have been the messenger sent with it. As the light-bearer and the joy-bringer many a one had blessed him. His happy manner, his homely ways, his pleasant gossip about all that could interest, his simplicity and quaintness did the people more good they said, "nor the doctor hisself," which is not altogether incredible seeing that most of them were doctored "*by the parish.*" *The Sun of Righteousness* carries the healing in His wings. There is nothing that heals in the gloom of righteousness—nothing that heals in the chill, sunless religion that goes through its duty cold and unrejoicing, like a November day.

"They don't do much good," Mister Horn often

said, "who have stayed in the thunder till it has turned their milk of human kindness sour."

It is a way of doing good much overlooked by many learned doctors and great professors that the Bible recommends, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.*"

"Bitters are useful sometimes, and blisters are needed now and then; but as a general sort of a family medicine that it's best to keep about one, there's nothing like a merry heart," was one of Mister Horn's favourite recipes, and many grateful testimonials would have testified to its efficacy. Jim Niggardly with a purse of golden guineas couldn't have made old Jowl's face brighten into such a happiness as did the merry heart that rang in every word Mister Horn spoke.

"I've been thinking as I came up the hill what a happy old fellow you ought to be, friend," continued Mister Horn.

"Me, Mast' Horn, so I am, bless yir," and old Jowl looked happier than ever.

"'Well,' I said to myself, 'if anybody's got a father so rich and so kind as his Father, he might set up for a gentleman, I count.' I've been looking at your Father's estates, old friend, coming up the hill. He is rich, is your Father,—why He puts golden buds on the very furze bushes, and powders gems on the butterflies, and strews all the

shady places with diamonds! And to think thou art His son and heir, old friend! 'Eh, he will be a rich man some day, will old Jowl,' says I to myself as I came along."

"Ay, as kind as He's rich, Mast' Horn, bless Him! I oftenist think that I'm like the prodigal son—poor enough, an' a bit hungry and cold sometimes, but it's like the prodigal when the father had met him, and fall'd on his neck and kissed him and said, 'he was dead and is alive agen.' Why that kep' him happy till he got to the father's house. And then! then!"—and the blue eyes sparkled into tears—"then there was the best robe, and the fatted calf, and the bein' merry. I'm goin' home and He's with me, Mast' Horn. I sometimes feel the blessed arms roun' my neck, an' He gives me the kiss o' peace, an' presses me to His heart an' calls me His son till tears o' joy run down my cheeks, and I get a wonderin' what Heaven itself can be more 'an such blessedness as that. I oftenist think that we're gettin' near the door, very near."

Mister Horn was quiet for a minute or two, as if to let the old man feel the blessedness of his own words. Then he broke out more cheerfully.

"You've been growing a long time, old friend."

The blue eyes looked round with an amused

wonder, "Growin', Mast' Horn, whatever do yeow mean?"

"Why, rheumatics is what they call it by, but that's only what they say; *it's growin' pains, it's growin' pains.* I know when I was a lad I used to have a lot o' aches and pains sometimes, and the old woman would say, 'Ah Jim, it's on'y growin' pains.' Ay, and all our pains and aches is nothing but growin' pains if we use 'em right. These pains o' yours, friend, they're on'y growin' pains—the wings pushing up a bit, lengthening and strengthening, till some day they'll be full grown, and then—you'll clap the glad wings and tower away."

"Ah, it'll soon be, Mast' Horn, very soon," and the look was of triumphant joy. "I think they're comin', and a bringin' the best robes. An' I count I shall hardly know mysen! To 'a' done with the old smock, and to put on the white robes, an' be a gentleman all of a sudden." And the old man laughed at the happy notion. "To think o' their comin' down here to this little place o' mine an' knockin' at the door, an' comin' in to fetch me up to the glorious Palace where they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, for the Lamb which is in the midst o' the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains o' waters. To think o' my poor crippled feet a walkin' the golden street like the rest o' the priests and

kings, and this old hand done with roomatics and a sweepin' the golden 'arp! I read about it and picture it over to mysen till I'm a'most up there, a flyin' about among the glorious great angels who do excel in strength. Eh, what errands I'll go for my Master, then! Ay, Mast' Horn, it'll be a mystery an' a mercy, but bless the Lord it'll be for all that."

Presently followed a few words of simple, earnest prayer, and Mr. Horn rose to leave.

"I've brought a dinner for you, old friend," he said, taking the money out of his pocket; "here's three shillings and sixpence from Jim Niggardly."

"The Lord bless him, the Lord bless him and yeow for bringin' on it, Mast' Horn! The Lord bless yeow both! 'Twere on'y this mornin' as I wa' talkin' to the Lord, for I ma'n't kneel to pray, so I sit and talk to Him—"

"Face to face as a man talketh to his friend," whispered Mr. Horn to himself.

"And I say, 'Lord, I got a bit o' care, and I want to cast it 'pon Thee, knowin' that Thou care for me. The quarter day is comin' and *there's the rent*, Lord. O Lord! whatsomever I suffer I know Thou permit it, and Thou art wise and *very* good, but, Lord, I wouldn' have nobody 'cept mysel' to be the wuss for me, Lord.' I wa' sure the Lord hear me, and now 'ere's the answer. Bless the Lord. Tell Jim I ma'n't do much for 'm, but I'll do what I can. I'll

pray the Lord bless 'm, and yeow too, Mast' Horn. For I like to think that for all I can do so little, my Father isn't goin' to let anybody be in His debt. He wouldn't have a cup o' cold water given but what He'll keep count of it and pay it back some day. Tell Jim that I'll tell my Father all about it and ask Him to bless Jim an' all belongin' to him. Bless His name, He will too, I know He will." And as the bent fingers held the money the lips moved in gratitude and prayer.

"Good day, old friend, good day," cried Mister Horn, abruptly, and hurried away, brushing his hand across his eyes as he went, and the short legs hastened off over the field and along the highway at their swiftest pace.

* * * * *

Ah, good reader, is not this riches a deceitful jade? Why, here was James Niggardly, Esquire, amidst his plenty, grumbling and growling at a hundred annoyances. Yet he had spent a great deal of money on his house and furniture, in order to secure his happiness. The garden absorbed money in wages and work that was meant to be repaid in pleasure. The savoury odour of dinner came breathing delicious promises into the dining-room. Pictures were on the walls; books on the shelves; handsome ornaments on the mantel-piece. Jim Niggardly himself lay back in his chair, his right

hand playing with the heavy gold chain, the left hand jingling gold and silver in his pocket, the consoling golden sherry standing within reach. Yet he was thinking himself a man ill-used and wronged! And all the time three shillings and sixpence was sufficient to buy so light a heart, and a soul so winged with joy as that which Mister Horn had found in old Jowl's tumble-down cottage.

CHAPTER VII.

Old Friend Chaffer—Where he Lived.

OF all Mister Horn's friends there was no such favourite as old Friend Chaffer. Whenever Mister Horn began to talk of what people could do in the way of giving, all knew what was coming; there was sure to be something about old Friend Chaffer.

Their admiration was mutual and usually expressed itself in the same terms.

"Ah! he is a wonder, is old Friend Chaffer," jerked out Mister Horn, while the ash stick came down with a thump, as much as to say, "Ay, there's no mistake about that, master."

"You know he's a wonder, is Mister Horn—wholly a wonder," quoth Old Friend Chaffer with a shake of his little old head, and a broad smile that revealed the lingering grinders, few and far between.

He lived in the village of Hillingsham, commonly known as Hill'sam. The traveller who should pass up the narrow winding hill and reach the scattered houses of this parish, would not think it peculiarly favourable to the development of heroes.

Old labourers, bent and withered as if beaten down by the winds and rains, and dried up by the suns in which they had spent fifty or sixty years of their life, crept along in smock-frocks, each with its peculiar ornamentation in front like a breast-plate of needlework: the projecting legs were buttoned in leather gaiters that narrowed into marvellously small ankles, and then went swelling into a pair of huge hob-nailed boots. Younger men had, for the most part enlisted or emigrated, while the daughters were hired, from year to year, at the Michaelmas "statty"—as the statute fair was called. The early cockcrow woke the little place to the kind of walking sleep that was its life; the hum of the thrashing machine was fitting music throughout the monotonous day, and in the evening the booming cockchafer had it almost to himself.

The church stood long and low amidst a clump of

dying trees. The churchyard, separated from the road by a slimy horsepond, was neglected and nettle-grown. The weather-worn wooden memorials of the dead, stretching the whole length of the grave, told only of long life and unchanging names. The village that commenced with the church was in every way a continuation of its appearance. It was ugly—almost ugly enough for a town. The houses were neither sufficiently old nor poor for Nature to have touched them with her kindly hand into something of her own: there was no moss-grown thatch, nor walls thick with honeysuckle and clustering rose, nor ivy climbing—

"Aloft a grove, beneath a knot of snakes."

The cottages were most of them of dull red brick with slated roofs, that in summer looked fever-stricken with the heat, and in winter looked blue and red with the cold.

At the other end of the village was the other place of worship, as if between them they would secure all the souls. It was a white-washed little place, with low roof and two arched windows. The door was covered with many coats of paperings, remnants of various parish notices and Circuit announcements, with lingering patches legible enough to make an absurd jumble, in which a public tea-meeting was followed by compulsory vaccina-

tion, and special sermons had to do with votes for the knights of the shire, and "sermons would be preached by" a list of ratepayers as long as one's arm. Everybody knew in a moment that it was a Methodist chapel.

Such was Hill'sam, where old Friend Chaffer lived and worked through the six days of the week. But Hill'sam on Sunday seemed quite another place. The church woke up and crashed out a merry peal that met you with its music a mile away. The men put on the week's clean smock frock, the women donned their old red cloaks, and the best bonnet saw the light once more. A Sunday at Hill'sam was a day to be remembered. You overtook men and women hot and dusty with their long walk, the father carrying one, perhaps two little ones, while the maternal shawl bulged with the shape of a basket.

You might have known where the chapel was by the folk that lingered about the door and in the road. At church all went in before the service commenced, and were ready at once reverently to worship God; but at chapel they waited thus as if to make sure that the preacher had come before they risked themselves inside—perhaps there was too much reason for their caution.

Then the singing at Hill'sam!—Well, to say the least, it could not be forgotten. There was a

clarionet, which tried to make up in zeal what it lacked in skill; and the fiddle—the fickle fiddle!—that had its periodical fits of goodness, and then was periodically reported "to have given up religion and gone to church." There was the pious old leader—heaven bless him!—who believed tunes were spiritual exactly in proportion to their runs and repeats. Yet was there a heart about it all and an earnestness that were infinitely better, more acceptable to God, and more profitable to the people, than the vain performances of many more ambitious places in which no one can join.

After the service the preacher for the day had to meet the one Society class. This over, all adjourned to the vestry, where a score of cups and saucers, the opening of bundles, and other signs intimated that dinner came next. One basket produced a knife and fork—they were for the preacher; for him, too, were the slices of bread and meat, and the further luxuries of a plate, a screw of salt, and a mustard-pot. The others sat round on the forms, ranged in families—a family clasp-knife with its one large blade did common duty on the bread, and bit of cheese or bacon. Then came two or three cups of tea completing the meal.

Oh what happy talks knit those hearts together and helped to make the Sabbath the blessed day

that it was to them! Some of earth's godliest saints gathered at that humble meal. Look at the tall, bald-headed old man in the corner, keeping himself very much to himself; and well he may, for he has neither kith nor kin, that he knows of, in the whole wide world. Those large eyes of his staring out into vacancy as if they had seen nothing, and found in that enough to be in a perpetual wonder, have seen some rare sights. He was brought up as a lad to the business and profession of a smuggler by a pious uncle—for in those days some believed that piety and smuggling could meet together and kiss each other; and it is duly recorded yet in the "Minutes," how that the Conference gravely asked what should be done to put down smuggling in the Societies, when it was agreed that no smuggler should be allowed to remain among us as a Local-preacher! He was kidnapped and pressed into His Majesty's Navy more than sixty years ago, and bears about him traces of incidents as romantic as were ever written, and those wide-open eyes have seen more history than most of us have read. But the one story he can remember most vividly, the one incident he can talk of most unwearied, is how that under an orange tree on the top of a lonely island in the South Pacific Ocean, he sought the forgiveness of his sins and found peace with God; and how that

it was followed by a revival on board the Man-of-War in which half the crew and many of the officers were converted; and how that they sailed into battle singing hymns—hymns that sometimes were suddenly silenced here and there, not because the song had ceased but because the singer had gone to sing elsewhere.

There is good old mother Bear, too, mumbling her bit of bread and muttering her gratitude by turns, who, when a friend called to see her the other day, said, "Ah, God is good, He is good to think o' me as He do, for I ain't nohow worth it. Ye know up to las' Saturday I had a half-a-crown a week from the parish, and then I had a goodish appetite, but then they tookt sixpence off, and that very day I los' my appetite so as I can do just as well as ever—*Ah, God is good, He can make things fit so!*"

That old white-haired saint who has just come hobbling in on a pair of sticks,—he with the many folds of white kerchief wrapt about his neck, and the very tight-fitting suit of black that ends in the gouty knuckles and the glossy knobs on his shoes —he is the father of Methodism in these parts. A Local-preacher sixty years ago, you should hear him tell how that when preaching out of doors once in the neighbouring village, the burly butcher came behind and suddenly clasped him in his arms, and

flung him in the horse-pond,—swollen as it was with winter rains, he had a very narrow escape from drowning. And how that same butcher shortly afterwards was stricken down under the power of the Word—felled like an ox—and went roaring for many days in the disquietude of his soul, until he found peace with God and became a champion for Jesus as before he had been for the devil.

After dinner the children met for an hour in Sunday-school,—humble work enough it was that did not get much beyond the letters and small words, but like all true work for God, it was imperishable, and Heaven kept the record faithfully in the Book of Golden Deeds.

The afternoon service closed the day. Then the fathers and mothers with children and empty baskets went homeward over the fields or along the highways, leaving Hill'sam to sink to its usual quiet for another week.

But before this our attention would have been caught by the quaint figure of one who must have a chapter all to himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

Old Friend Chaffer—What he Did.

NOW of all the prosaic folks of this parish of Hill'sam there was none with so little promise in his appearance as our old Friend Chaffer.

A little bent old man, with flat feet that shuffled along uneasily, was what one saw at the first glance. "As tender as old Friend Chaffer's corns," was a well-worn proverb with Mister Horn, by which he usually summed up his opinion of folk that were easily put out and vexed. As he shuffled nearer there was disclosed a figure quaint in feature, expression and dress. The hat,

that once held the skull of an eminent divine, accommodated itself to this smaller head by lying back until it almost rested upon his shoulders and projected in front immediately above the eyes, just a fringe of flat hair marking the line of separation. Underneath was a pair of as pleasant eyes as ever merry wrinkles played around; the cheeks and dumpy nose were scorched into a permanent glossy redness; the mouth, large and sunken, was fixed into an unchangeable smile that seemed to give a twist to all he said, making the husky sentences end in a sort of little laugh. A velveteen coat with sporting buttons hung in folds around the little old man. The trousers might have laid claim to all the privileges of apostolical succession, and like the doctrine itself, had to be much patched from many sources.

His life had been spent as a farm labourer. On ten shillings a week he and his good wife had brought up a family of eleven children, and now at seventy years of age he found his hard work rewarded with a parish allowance of five shillings a week.

Look well at him, for he is a hero. Ay look well at him, as Mister Horn would often say, look well at him in this world, for he will be too high up for most of us to see him in the next.

If the very many thousands whose names fill

the Annual Report of the Wesleyan Missionary Society were to pass before us, a vaster, perhaps a more imposing procession had never been beheld. Crowned heads and robes of royalty would swell its pomp; generous merchants and devoted ladies would testify that giving doth not impoverish; chieftains decked with feathers and wild beasts' skins would lead on their tribes; furred wanderers from the north would march beside the negro and the stately Brahmin—almost every nation would lend its variety of costume and appearance, and send its pledges that all the kingdoms of the earth should become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ. But first and foremost should be none of these. Not the king with splendid gift in stately chariot—not the chief enthroned with barbaric pomp upon the glittering elephant—not the stalwart leader of a once savage tribe now bringing the weapons of cruelty to lay at the feet of the Prince of Peace—not the merchant-prince whose vast munificence has made his name a household word throughout the world. Heading the mighty host should be a little stature and quaint figure hurrying on with shuffling feet—first and foremost there would would be our old Friend Chaffer!

With five shillings a week to live on—five shillings for rent and food, for firing and clothes, with class money never forgotten—he appears

in this year's report *for one pound and twelve shillings!*

One pound twelve! It sets one thinking of the Report, and of what some of those entries mean that look so unimportant and are so quickly read—what stories of self-denial are locked up in them—what scheming to save, what struggles to spare. Ay, and more commonly forgotten, what system beginning thus has unconsciously spread itself throughout all the management, and wrought more than its own supply.

This one pound twelve was the result of a year's hard and painful work. Miles were shuffled over to collect a shilling and very often for less. Little bits of garden produce were lovingly worked at, and eagerly sold for a few pence. How warily the conversation would be turned round when any one dropped in, how cunningly led up to a certain point until suddenly the box made its appearance, explaining and applying all that had gone before! The philosophy of that Scripture, "A liberal man *deviseth* liberal things," could find no better illustration than in old Friend Chaffer. With no such restless thought did ever genius seek to apply a new principle or to produce the new machine; with no such uneasy watchfulness did ambition ever try to turn advantages to its own account as that with which old Friend Chaffer sought to fill his box.

Like the woman of Bible story, he had but "a precious box" to bring for his Master's acceptance and service, and to fill it richly full each year was his dream, his ambition, and his toil.

Picture the large hat, the glossy face, the loose coat, shuffling up the hill with the missionary-box under his arm, tied up in a coloured cotton handkerchief. In this sweltering heat and with his painful steps it will be an hour's hard work to get to the farm-house to which he is going. At length he reaches it, and stands amid the sheds. And now, making the pigeons fly disturbed from the barn roof and making the old dog moan in dismal concert, the little husky voice sings to the traditional tune the familiar hymn:—

"Blow ye the trumpet, blow,
The gladly solemn sound,
Let all the nations know,
To earth's remotest bound;
The year of Jubilee is come!
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home."

Then panting with the effort, and pausing to recover breath and to stroke the little fringe of flat hair over his eyes he sang the second and other verses of the hymn.

"Jesus our great High-priest,
Hath full atonement made:
Ye weary spirits, rest,
Ye mournful souls be glad;

AT LENGTH HE REACHES THE FARM-HOUSE, AND STANDS AMID THE SHEDS.—*See p. 70.*

The year of Jubilee is come!
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home

"Ye who have sold for nought
Your heritage above,
Receive it back unbought;
The gift of Jesu's love:
The year of Jubilee is come!
Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home."

At once the news spread that old Friend Chaffer had arrived. All knew him, and all were compelled to like him if it were only for his simple, cheery face. The master came across the yard from the stock to lean upon his spud with an amused attention, and to roll in a few bass notes when it came to the last two lines; the "missis" and eager children crowded the old porch; the servants looked out from the windows, and boys, in little smocks and gaiters, gathered round him with a customary grin. When the hymn was gone through, the box was carefully untied and handed to the master, and thence throughout the house. Everybody gave something. As it came back again it was a picture worthy of any pencil to see the little old head hung on one side as the box was lifted to try its increased weight, the face glowing with contentment, and the mouth and cheeks and eyes all puckered up into a hundred quaint wrinkles that seemed to vie with each other in expression of

merry gratitude. Then came a verse or two of the hymn:—

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth His successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more.

"For him shall endless prayer be made,
And praises throng to crown his head;
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice."

Again the box was carefully wrapt up, and the little bent figure shuffled homeward, past all work for himself, but thankful, most thankful, that he could still do something for his beloved Master.

Once he boldly proposed to call upon the parson of the parish, who had not more kindly regard for the Methodists than one could expect: they were a sort of poachers who trespassed and poached upon his preserves with impunity. When old Friend Chaffer suggested it to his wife she was almost alarmed, and tried to talk him out of it. The matter soon dropped, and the good wife triumphantly concluded that he had given up so wild a notion; but, unknown to her, he shuffled away one day to the rectory.

The good clergyman received him kindly, and heard his request, and, indeed, handled with some curiosity the treasured box. But putting it down, as old Friend Chaffer finished his appeal, he re-

minded him that he knew nothing of the Wesleyan Missions, and must have some information first. At once the old man promised to bring him a Report. Six weary miles he trudged to fetch it from the Superintendent at Gippington, and six miles back, and the next day stole away quietly again to the parson.

"He did stare when he saw so much readin'," the old man told us afterward; "he looked quite frightened when I said I 'ud leave it with him to *read it through.*"

A week after old Friend Chaffer went once more. The good clergyman was amazed and much interested.

"Why, I thought you Methodists were a feeble folk, but I find that you do even more than we do." (It was a treat to see old Friend Chaffer's face as he told of that!) "As to money—you raise as much as we do, and I can't make out how you manage to do so much with it. I must say that you folks know how to get money, and how to make the most of it. I really can't give you less than five shillings. Come for it yourself every year, and lend me the Annual Report of your Society."

"I was comin' out o' the passage," the old man went on, "and 'twas darkish, and I did'n' know anybody was near by, and I was sayin' to myself, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul,' when the door was

opened for me, and I saw the parson's good lady, and she say, 'You mustn't tell anyone; but here's another half-crown for you, Chaffer, and I wish I could give you more;'—and the way she say it was as good as five shillings, 'twas so kind and pretty spoken."

But it was not his skill as a missionary collector only that gained for him the title of "a wonder." There was a story that old Friend Chaffer would but seldom allude to, but which Mister Horn delighted to tell to every one.

From the time of his conversion Chaffer had determined to devote something regularly to the work of God. It was no easy task, with an additional mouth to be filled each year, while the wages kept at the same hard line.

"I al'us carried my class penny in my waistcoat pocket till the Sunday meetin'," the old man has told us, "so that it was sure whatever come. But then there was the Missions: I loved them very much, and al'us read the 'Notices;' an' there was a collection or two, an' one thing an' another, so I wanted three or four pennies more sometimes. My neighbours 'ud say to me as it wa'n't needed for me to do so much; but I say to them, 'If I was an archangel, I'd try to sing my very best to the Lord, but seein' as I a'n't, well, the on'y thing is to do the best thing as I can 'pon ten shillin' a-week and

'leven children. Why, bless ye, it's wholly the same if *we do our best!*"

Here, too, the liberal mind devised liberal things. The little garden around his cottage grew a few vegetables, and two or three fruit trees sent a few baskets during the year to market. Choosing the sunniest corner, and in which grew his choicest apple tree, he christened that "the Lord's bit." Whatever he could make out of that was to be given away. Love is satisfied only when it gives its best. This corner received of all the most careful labour, this was the first to be dug up and planted, and for this was reserved the pick of roots and seeds. Here the depredations of the frost and the earliest sign of blight were most jealously traced, and here the promise of the spring and the summer worth were most joyfully anticipated.

But once there came a time when the garden began to grow neglected. The weeds stood thick and tall. The unpruned trees were tangled with wild creepers. Chaffer's familiar face was missed from the Sunday services. He had been brought home from his work with an injured leg, and lay upon his bed with a prospect of not being able to leave it for months. Then sore want slowly stripped the house. The little savings put by for some such rainy day were soon gone through—one by one disappeared the less needed things about the house. Again the wolf

was at the door, and there seemed nothing left with which to drive him away. The children were coming home, and there was not a crust in the house.

Then the anxious wife bethought her of something that would scare the wolf. Laid by in a box, carefully wrapt up in a piece of paper, were four shillings—four precious shillings!—the produce of "the Lord's bit." Taking them in her hand, she came to her husband—they were starving—could they not take this money, or at least borrow it and pay it back when times were better? Little Chaffer, burdened as he was with bitter wants, had hitherto borne up bravely. But now he burst into tears. "What," he cried, "play Ananias and Sapphira, and rob our only Friend! O no, no, lass!" he went on as the tears streamed down his cheeks, "if it is the Lord's will we can starve and die and go home to heaven, but we ma'nt do this, come what will. The Blessed Lord knows all about it and He can fill up the flour barrel. But we won't take back the little cake that we have given to Him. Trust Him, lass, for we've got His word for it that He will hear us if we call upon Him in the day of trouble. He will, too, I know He will."

The poor wife turned in despair to the lingering herbs in the garden, and gathering what little there was, went off to Gippington to pick up what she could for them.

Chaffer lay in the lonely place thinking of the Lord and His ways. "Well, we're come to the last pinch now," he sighed, "and may be it is the turnin' point. The doctor tell me I ma'nt set my foot to ground, but I'll try,—happen the Lord 'll help me."

Painful and stiff the leg was, and it was with much difficulty that he hobbled to the door. He crept along to "the Lord's bit," and looked at it with such a grief as that with which one would look for the first time at the grave of some most beloved friend.

"Well, I ma'nt let this be, if I never do anything else. I'm up now, and may never be up agen, and it 'll comfort me to know as my last bit o' work was for Him."

And the withered hands clung to the spade, and he struggled slowly to turn over the earth. It was hard work, but done with a desperateness as if it were love's last effort. He was in the midst of his work when his wife was coming down the hill toward their cottage. She had sold her herbs and was returning with at least one's day's supply, when she caught sight of her husband in the garden. She could scarcely believe her eyes at first, but soon surprise gave way to grief and vexation, and as she appeared at the gate poor Chaffer hobbled in before the coming storm, and crept back again to his couch.

The storm of course soon blew over, for it was only the anger of anxious affection, especially as Chaffer found himself only wearied by his effort. The next day he crept out again, and finished "the bit." Strength rapidly returned, and in a few days he went back to his work, nor ever felt anything more of the injury.

"Eh, wife," he whispered, when he brought home his wages, "I should be on my back yet, if we'd touched the money o' 'the Lord's bit.'"

So old Friend Chaffer came to be called "a wonder."

CHAPTER IX.

Introduces us to another Friend.

VERY different from all Mister Horn's other friends was Bill Smith. Very unlike James Niggardly, Esq., of Stukeville; very unlike old Friend Chaffer, or old Mast'r Jowl, was this big broad-shouldered blacksmith. Yet none the less a friend, and our record would be very incomplete without a full length portrait of Mister Horn's favourite disciple.

Nor could you wonder at Mister Horn's interest in him. He was yet a boy when his widowed mother, with her last breath, commended him to the care

of her old "class-leader." And henceforth, however unpleasant it might be to the young apprentice, Mister Horn came to look upon him almost as a son. Bill on his part had done his best to be free from this oversight; indeed had done enough to wear out all hope and patience, but no matter what trouble or what disgrace he got into he found his mother's friend waiting with loving entreaty and wise advice—not unmixed it is true with a well-deserved rating. Nor was this all. Mister Horn believed in the artillery of prayer—that no city of Mansoul with mighty gates and massive walls could withstand its power if you only keep pounding away at it. Heaven itself could be carried by storm; then what mortal man could stand it, though all the hosts of hell were leagued inside. Twenty years of such unwearied unfaltering prayer had rivetted Bill Smith to Mister Horn's heart by more than fetters of brass.

Bill was apprenticed to the village blacksmith. But do not let visions of the chestnut tree and its surroundings rise in the mind. Old Graves was as much unlike the traditional blacksmith of poetry as the stern realities of life generally are unlike the poetical descriptions.

A bent old man like the figure of an ancient Atlas without the world on his back, his head thrust forward as far as it would go, and a thick clump of

projecting hair going out beyond that like a horn. He went about always solemnly shaking his head, as if reading the "vanity of vanities" in the dust on which his eyes were fixed; wheezing with asthma as if his own bellows had to work hard to keep the inner fires going. He might perhaps have taught Bill to poke the fire and to handle the tongs, only he always claimed that as the master's part. The pupil's was to fling the sledge-hammer, to shoe the village horses, and to do all other work whatsoever, belonging to the art and mystery of a smith, by the aid of such natural wit as he possessed. To Bill, work was a joyous thing, with those broad shoulders of his and those stout young arms. He whistled cheerily to the roar of the bellows, and sung to the ringing anvil, never thinking that he kept the house over the old man's head,—but always thinking that some day he should greatly like to keep the roof over the head of somebody else, whose sweet voice Bill often stopped to listen to as it sang merrily away at the little kitchen window.

Meanwhile what Bill himself was blind to was perfectly plain to the eyes of that somebody else. And when, in the cold damp weather, father was at home wheezing and shaking his solemn head at the fire as if dumbly preaching to it of its cold dead ashy future, how could fair Jenny Graves keep herself from seeing that it was Bill who kept them

in bread and cheese. And for her father's sake of course what else could she do than like him. Not that he was anything to her—of course not. But as a dutiful daughter she was bound to admire those broad shoulders, and those strong arms that did her father such good service. And for her father's sake it was that she stept in to the smithy to see that all was going right in his absence. Who knew indeed what this apprentice might be about? So sweet Jenny Graves stood often like a pretty picture framed by the old doorway of the smithy, her pleasant face and slim figure, the white arms with the sleeves still pinned back to the shoulder, coming for a minute, and then tripping lightly back again. How should she know that for a full five minutes afterwards the strong hands of the apprentice lay idle on the hammer as it rested on the anvil, and the apprentice wasted five precious minutes in gazing vacantly at the duck pond and ash heap that lay before the smithy; or that for the same space of time the hand held the chain of the bellows listlessly, while the same vacant gaze peered into the depths of the fire? How should she know it indeed, unless it were because she stood dreamily looking out of the window with hands that only played with the dough, or trifled with the soap suds, for a like space of time?

The truth that fair Jenny had seen with half

an eye was forced upon her more plainly as the time went by. The days soon came when Jenny had to step into the smithy to look after her father as well as the apprentice, and found him unable to use the hammer, and scarcely fit to hold the chain of the bellows with his trembling hand. He could do little else but sit in by the smithy fire with his leathern apron spread over his knees, dumbly shaking his head over the flame, as if solemnly prophesying to the horse-shoe of the evil days that were in store for it—that it was all very well to glow about it now, but the time was coming when it should be cold and hard; when it should be trodden under foot; when it should be rung on the hard highway for many a weary mile, and plashed in the dismal mud; or, there was no knowing, lifted up by an angry heel to serve a spiteful kick. Prophesyings that were suddenly interrupted as Bill seized the glowing mass with the tongs and made a shower of glory fly from it, and then dipped it hissing in the trough. But before long that place was deserted, and solemnly shaking his head as if predicting his speedy end, old Graves took to his bed, and soon fulfilled his prophecy by departing this life.

Bill was not yet out of his time when poor old Graves passed away. But being master both of his trade and of Jenny's affections, he took at once the

daughter and the business. And Mr. Horn came in to give his blessing to each, and thanked God that life began so brightly with the widow's son and his happy wife.

For awhile things went on as pleasantly as they promised at the first. But there came a slow creeping fear across Jenny's heart, like a gathering cloud, that by-and-bye burst in a deluge of sorrow,—a flood of grief that swept away all peace and comfort and almost all hope, and left a life blighted, blasted, cursed.

Bill's visits to "The Green Man" had been daily at their marriage. The whole village held that there was no harm in a half-pint now and then. The whole village, however, might have known better, for there was abundant evidence of the horrible mischief that began in that half-pint now and then.

The whole village had heard Mister Horn's opinion about it, often enough—unfortunately he had many opportunities of giving it. "There mayn't be any harm in a half-pint now and then; but there's death in the pot if you will go to the public-house to drink it. There's a good deal more than a half-pint o' beer in the matter then. There's company that nobody would say that there's no harm in; and there's temptations that a man is a fool to get into, and that 'tis hard work to get out of. The mouse liked cheese,

and thought there was no harm in a nibble now and then. Well, there wasn't. But when he went into the trap to get it that was another matter then, as mousey found out to his sorrow." Like many others, Bill's half-pints became more frequent; occasionally an evening was spent with the company that gathered there. And one night Bill came staggering home *drunk*, swearing, quarrelling, ready to strike his own gentle wife;—it seemed as if a swarm of devils had burst into the house that night. They had taken possession of it, and it would be a long time before any could cast them out. That night poor Jenny's face lost its roses, from that night onward for many a wretched month. With bitter grief she went to tell Mr. Horn of her sorrow; whilst shame and vexation and a mad kind of defiance of everybody sent Bill soaking all the next day within the shelter of "The Green Man." The misery of soberer moments drove him for some relief to the public house, to its company and its drink. Home was home no more, each evening was spent there.

The house of God was forsaken; the old associates were cast off. Mister Horn came and entreated and rated, but all in vain. Surly and miserable Bill listened without a word; or angrily claimed his liberty to please himself. Meanwhile what with earning less and spending more, the home and all

about it soon became as miserable as himself, and gave him another excuse, though none was needed, for going again to "The Green Man." The little cottage was stript. The ornaments that had been Jenny's pride, the furniture itself, the very clothes were gone for bread. And now looking in at the dark smithy door, fearful of the angry oaths that would greet her, was a pale-faced, thinly-clad woman, and a ragged child hiding frightened in the folds of her dress.

There were hours, days of remorse; days in which Bill vowed amendment, in which he sought to be again the Bill of olden times—and hope flushed the pale cheek for a moment, like the dawn of a brighter day. But the spell of the curse was on him. Good resolutions were swept to the wind and down again he would sink, lower and deeper than ever. Poor Jenny must have given in with a broken heart, but for the hope and help that Mister Horn never failed to bring her. He too might have despaired, but that day and night he pleaded for the widow's son, with an importunity that would not, could not, give him up—prayer could do miracles still.

At last the answer came. Bill himself must tell the story, as he never failed to tell it when somebody needed encouragement, or when others told of what the Lord had done for them. Bill

wasn't a man of many words, and he did not belong to the school of weeping prophets ; but it was hard work for him to get through without one or two break-downs.

"Eh, friends, I've heard folks say sometimes that 'tis hard work going to Heaven. And they talk of their temptations and trials. Well, I went along the road to Hell, a bad bit, as many of you know. *That's* a hard road if you like. Talk about your temptations and trials, why the place for them is all along the downward road. To see men going home with their wages decent and happy, and you going sneaking in your rags, to spend it all upon yourself, that's enough to make a man feel like a wretch and a fool. To go along by a nice tidy cottage, with the man working in his garden, and a tidy woman looking out o' the doorway and the children helping father—and then to come into your own place and to see it all mounds and heaps, to see the windows stuffed with rags, to see your poor wife so miserable that she can hardly speak to you for crying, and the little children run away so soon as ever you come for fear of the man that's their own father,—that's temptation if you like. Hardly a chair to sit down upon, not a bit o' fire in the grate; and to see the wretched wife and poor little pale-faced children sit down to a bit o' dry bread, all because they've got a father who

spends his money in drink—that's something like a temptation and trial. To go wandering about the lanes on a Sunday, and hear the church bells or the singing of the children, and to mind how you used to go with them, and to think of the dear old mother as took you there—and then to think o' where you're going to, that's something like a temptation an' trial. Why many's the time that I've climbed over a gate, and hid behind the hedge to get out o' the sight of some decent man going up to the House of God with his children. Temptations and trials! Why often and often's the times that I've had hard work to keep my own hands off my own self, I've been that mad with myself, and that miserable—and I should have done it too, but for a kind of feeling that some day somehow or other I should be turned round by God's mercy helping me. And thank God I was.

"It was a Saturday night. I was more miserable than ever, and was angry at myself for feeling so. I was sitting in the beer-shop all without a word, and the rest was chaffing me for being so glum, till I felt as if I must have hit them. When up comes the landlord with my score. It was two shillings and one penny. I counted it out, and flung it on the table amongst the puddles of beer. Then a half-drunk fellow who had been a Methodist sings out, 'Eh, that's right, Bill; thee been takin' lessons

from Mister Horn—a penny a week and a shilling a quarter—only it's for thy beer score.' They all laughed at it as a wonderful joke. But that just finished me up. I was mad with misery before, and this capped it all. '*For going to Hell!*' I cried, and I rushed out, leaving the landlord and the rest of 'em staring.

"It was a wild night in March. The wind howled and moaned about me. The great black clouds hid the moon. All was dreary and desolate as if God had forsaken me. I walked on, not knowing where I went, or caring either, until I got to a lonely place down on the marshes. I felt that I was as big a fool as I was a sinner, and I thought that I would kill myself and end it all. The wind came hissing in over the water, muttering and whispering all kinds of dreadful things. Now and then the moon would break out for a moment, and then the darkness covered it all up again. At length my heart was broken, and flinging myself on my knees, I could pray—*God be merciful to me a sinner!* I felt sure that if I did not get saved then, I never should. I had put it off and off, and got worse each time. If I put it off again I should surely be lost. So I began to roar aloud in my misery and earnestness. I forgot all about the time. I prayed on hour after hour. The wind had gone down—I remember as if it were yesterday. The

dawn was just creeping up, cold and gray. Then came the remembrance of those words, something like this,—'*Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man.*' It broke with faint light upon my soul, but slowly it came to mean more and more—'For me!' I thought, and hoped, and half believed. For *every man!* I cried again. For such a wretch and drunkard as I had been. Ah! I can never tell how, but I saw it all in a moment! '*For me,*' I cried, '*Yes, for me;*' *by the grace of God for me.*

"I often think of it, and I sing those lines o' the Hymn-Book like as if they were put there on purpose for me :—

'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me!
I hear Thy whisper in my heart;
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
Pure, universal love Thou art;
To me, to all, Thy mercies move:
Thy nature and Thy name is Love.

'I know Thee, Saviour, who Thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's Friend;
Nor wilt Thou with the night depart,
But stay and love me to the end,
Thy mercies never shall remove;
Thy nature and Thy name is Love.

'The Sun of righteousness on me
Hath rose, with healing in his wings:
Withered my nature's strength, from Thee
My soul its life and succour brings;

My help is all laid up above ;
Thy nature and Thy name is Love.'

It was all right after that, friends. I'd tried it in my own strength before. Good resolutions and all that won't hold a man when the temptation comes on him. He breaks them and goes just where the devil likes to drive him. But when Jesus comes He turns the devil out and then a man sits down at those blessed feet, clothed, and in his right mind."

CHAPTER X.

How Bill Smith Managed.

OLD Mrs. Catchpole had dropt in to see Widow Hunt.

Life had not many comforts for Widow Hunt, but there was one so richly enjoyed that it made up for all deficiencies in number or variety. It was to sit after dinner, when all was "tidied up," in her clean white cap well frilled at the edges, and to hear the news. Let others soar after the sublime and talk of their lofty ambition, Widow Catchpole's idea of real happiness was to hear the latest gossip of the village—of marriages in the bud, and whis-

pers of how Hodge was a-keeping company with Joan; of marriages blossoming, and how that the day was fixed; of marriages fruitful, as they always were at Tattingham, babies coming, babies come, and babies going through all the wonderful range of life that belongs to babydom.

Widow Hunt's was the rare gift of listening well; never obtruding an opinion or interrupting any remark, she invariably came in like an echo at the end of a sentence, faintly repeating the last two or three words with a serious shake of her head. To-day she sat on a low stool in front of the fireplace, her elbows resting on her knees, the hands exposing the palms to the grate, and her projecting chin turned up towards the speaker. And seeing that the day was extremely hot, and that the fireplace shone brilliant only with black lead, it was at least creditable to the old lady's strength of imagination that she sought thus to screen her face and to warm her hands.

Her good friend, old Mrs. Catchpole, possessed the more common gift and grace of gossip. A shadow—the faintest murmur—even a *fancied* whisper could supply her with gossip for a day. The Israelites made bricks without straw—judging from her gossip old Mrs. Catchpole could have made them without clay. Out of nothing grew the most amazing secrets, told as if tremendous issues hung

upon them; a passing glance sufficed to reveal to Mrs. Catchpole prodigious events, to which the gunpowder plot wasn't fit to hold a candle so to speak.

She had nodded to Bill Smith as she came in at Widow Hunt's door. The lingering image suggested the topic on which old Mrs. Catchpole started as soon as she sat down by the frilled white cap, and "just got her breath," as she said,

"I count, my dear, I do, as Bill Smith must be a-making money," she began.

"A-making money," mumbled the white cap as it shook itself very solemnly.

"Why, there, it a'nt more nor five year agone sin' he was a'most the poorest man in the parish, a drinkin' an' a hidlin' about, as were quite disgraceful, an' his wife lookin' that starved—for all she kep' herself to herself, and thought as nobody knowed owt about it,—'t were plain as a pikestaff."

Mrs. Catchpole paused a moment to catch her breath. "Plain as a pikestaff," solemnly observed Widow Hunt, in the tones of a parish clerk.

"An' his children rags and tatters," continued the gossip, before the breath was fairly caught.

"Rags an' tatters," came in like an echo.

"But now—" and Mrs. Catchpole nodded her head and raised her hands, as if words were far too weak to express all she knew.

Widow Hunt gave a prolonged and solemn shake of the frilled cap that did duty at once for itself and the echo too.

This silence of the two old ladies fairly expressed the opinions of the village as to Bill Smith. "He must be a-making money," was the summary objection by which Mister Horn was always defeated when he referred to Bill as an instance of *thinking about giving*. Yet it was so obviously impossible for him to be getting rich or really saving much, that words generally gave way to the convenient vagueness of a nod or a look.

There could be no manner of doubt about it that Bill Smith was a prosperous fellow. Anybody must have been blind if they hadn't noticed a strange improvement in the look of the man and of all about him. Even a blind man would have *heard* it. For many a day together the smithy used to be still, but now early dawn seemed to wake the ringing anvil as well as the music of the birds. And to wake the smith himself as well as the smithy. You used to hear him cursing and growling; now six days out of seven you'd hear Bill Smith singing away with his bass voice. For smiths always sing—blacksmiths I mean—it's part of their work. Some ingenious person has pointed out how that the father of such as handle the harp and the organ, and the instructer of every artificer in brass and

iron, went hand in hand. What more likely, he asks, than that thoughtful Jubal stood in the smithy of his half-brother Tubalcain, listening to the ringing anvil, and the double bass of the bellows, as he reduced the many sounds to the first laws of harmony, and designed his harp and organ. This at least is certain, that every Tubalcain has been half-brother to Jubal ever since. It certainly was worth getting up early to hear Bill sing the Morning Hymn, to the old tune with its twists and twirls—

> "Awake, my soul, and with the sun
> Thy daily stage of duty run:
> Shake off dull sloth, and early rise,
> To pay thy morning sacrifice."

And then to hear him whistle the air as he thrust the iron into the fire, and taking the handle of the bellows, woke up the sleepy fire into a quivering flame that leapt half up the chimney. And when the iron was glowing white, it was good to see the sparks fly as the merry ringing kept tune to the vigour of the second verse,—

> "Redeem thy mis-spent moments past,
> And live this day as if thy last;
> Thy talents to improve take care;
> For the great day thyself prepare."

Then came the hissing from the trough, and the steam half hid the singer as he held the hot iron in the water, steadily singing the next verse,—

AND WHEN THE IRON WAS GLOWING WHITE, IT WAS GOOD TO SEE THE SPARKS FLY.—*See p.* 96.

"Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noon-day clear;
For God's all-seeing eye surveys,
Thy secret thoughts, thy words, and ways.

This solo that proclaimed Bill's prosperity in the smithy had quite a chorus of its own outside. There were airy little hummings of prosperity in the branches of the apple tree, that bent down to the ground with the weight of fruit. The vine leaves that peeped in at the windows rustled all day long, gossiping of the good things they saw within. The four grafted rose trees that stood in the corners of the grass-plot grew up stately and flourishing, as if conscious that they were part of the establishment and prospered accordingly. The tidy little woman that flitted past the open door, and the cheery song that came from within, completed a vision of prosperity. The children, too, that came down the shady lane from school, with rosy cheeks and glad voices, kept up the impression; and the baby! the youngest mother in Tattingham agreed that there never had been so prosperous a child in the place.

No wonder then that people talked of Bill Smith as "a-making money."

Moreover Bill thought himself as prosperous as any man need be—but then he used the word in his own sense.

"You see with most folks prosperin' means *getting money*, but I know that it means *using money*.

Five or ten shillin' a week, or twenty or thirty for that matter, don't make a man prosperous if he can't use it when he's got it. I can remember the time when the more I had the less I prospered—when more money on'y meant more drink and more want." This was Bill's explanation.

The fact was that ever since his conversion Bill had been a favourite pupil of Mister Horn's. He had taught his master perhaps as much as he had earned from him, for it was in frequent talk with him that Mister Horn often hit upon the views that he so perpetually advocated. Moreover he presented to Mr. Horn precisely the subject that he wanted on which to test his theories. An intelligent, good man, earning about his thirty shillings a week; here Mister Horn thought he might see how his opinions worked.

It was at the close of a long evening talk with Mister Horn that Bill first began to carry out his master's teaching.

"Good advice isn't a thing to be kept on the shelf and on'y looked at like the doctor's medicine when a man's gettin' better," he said to his wife as he sat down with pencil and paper to see how he could "match it."

They had been talking of the scriptural rule—to lay by on the first day of the week, as God prospered one.—"Not that what was best for some folks

in other times is always best for everybody in these, but that if a man *can* get Scripture to build upon it's the best and most comfortable foundation we can have," was Mister Horn's comment on the text.

So Bill sat with a neat little money-box before him, turning over the first principles of prosperity—*using money*.

The Bible lay open before him at the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the sixteenth chapter. Bill's finger had gone slowly over the second verse as he whispered the words to himself; then he sat up and looked at the fire, turning it over for some time. The thoughts very slowly shaped themselves into Bill's principles of giving.

"Seeming to me there's one thing as plain as a pikestaff, for all I'm no scholard—*a man ought to manage about givin'*. He is to lay by for it, just like he does for his house-rent, and for half a score o' things beside—for everything a'most except for giving. There's very many folks as can't give anything 'pon the spur o' the moment, and they think that 'tis all right if they don't. But seemin' to me 'tis all wrong. They couldn't pay their rent 'pon the spur o' the moment either, but for all that the landlord expects to get his money. A man is to lay by and arrange for it; and whether folks hold with doing it on the first day o' the week or the last, they are in a bad way who don't do it at all.

So that's the first head, as the preachers say." And Bill nodded his own head with considerable satisfaction, as if that point were settled.

"Now the next thing is how much to lay by," he went on, taking up his paper, and biting the end of his pencil as he turned over this question. "I can make thirty shillin' a week, takin' one week with another," Bill muttered slowly—and he paused again, gnawing at the pencil. "Well, s'pose I say three shilling a week," and he figured a large three at the top of the paper. He held it out at arm's length, put his head on one side, and looked at his handiwork with an air of satisfaction. "That's the second head then—*three.* I don't see how it can anyhow be less than that—as Mister Horn says that the Jew gave a tenth, and I'm not goin' to be behind the Jew. No, no, they didn't know anything about what Paul said," and Bill turned over three or four pages of his Bible. "'*Ye* know, *ye* know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.' No, I can't give less than a tenth, and I'm a'most thinkin' that I ought to give more. Well, let that stand to begin with—the more I get, the more I'll give of it."

And as if to confirm what was done, Bill stretched himself on the table, put his head on one side,

thrust out his tongue, and having wetted his pencil he went over the large three again.

Then he raised himself and bit the pencil vigorously, with the air of a man who felt himself getting through a difficulty. "The next thing is what must I lay by for. First of all there's the Lord's work o' course. I ought to begin with that I'm sure, for religion saved me more than the whole of it. Three shillings! why it wasn't half enough sometimes to pay for the week's beer. And then religion made me sober and steady and that brought me in three times as much. Besides, what else is there that's so well worth paying for. House-rent and doctor's bill a'n't to be mentioned in the same breath along with it. And butcher's meat, and bread isn't such good cheer as I get out o' religion. Folks pay for them as a duty; but what religion costs isn't a duty at all — that's only a *charity*, something that isn't meant for any but rich folks who can afford it—and folks must be very rich indeed before they can see their way to afford that. And besides that," Bill went on to himself, "somehow I don't like to think about it all as payin' debts. I want to feel like Mister Horn puts it, as if all I've got belongs to my blessed Lord, and I'm put in for kind of a steward, who has got to look after the estate and manage to make so much of it as ever he can for his master. And for a Master like mine—

bless His holy name! how can I ever do enough." And Bill's whole soul woke up in a minute into a song of praise—plaintively and tenderly came the words,—

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

And then loudly and heartily came the next verse,—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

"But come, Bill Smith; good feelin's and singin' hymns won't settle the matter;" and once more the teeth worked at the pencil, as Bill looked at the large figure three.

"To begin with there's class-money—wife and myself—without managin' I could give a penny a week, let's double that and see how it looks." So that was figured—*C. M. a quarter—wife and myself 4 shillin' and 4 pence.* "Then there's the ticket,—we'll double that and see how it looks." And that came in an uneven line. Ticket M. ditto, a quarter, 4 shillin'. "That looks very pretty, anyhow," cried Bill as he held it out admiringly. "Well, but I ha'n't done yet by a long way. There's the collections, and the poor folk in the place, it will be good to have a bit for them, so say five shillin' more."

"But stop," cried Bill, somewhat alarmed, "I'm goin' too fast," and he added it all up and found that it came to thirteen shillings and fourpence a quarter." "That 'll never do, never," and Bill scratched his head as if by way of waking up the sleeping brains inside. Then he figured three times thirteen, and stared with blank astonishment to see it come to thirty-nine shillings a quarter.

"It can't be right," said Bill, going over it again, and yet it seemed to be. Then to his relief he heard his wife moving upstairs. "Missis," cried he, bewildered, to his spouse, "I'm in a muddle. If I spend three shillin' a week, what 'll that come to in a quarter?"

"Why thirty-nine shillings, to be sure, Bill—won't it?" said the wife from the top of the stairs in an undertone, for Tattingham's most prosperous baby had just dropt off into an infantile snore that was much too musical to be harshly disturbed.

"So it is," said Bill, putting 39 beside the large 3, "and there's more than five and twenty shillin' left now. Why I shan't be able to find things enough to give to." Bill was really embarrassed with his riches. What should he put down next. As he looked about in wonder his eye fell on his little maiden's Missionary box, and at once another line filled up the paper—*Missions*, 1 *penny a week*—1*s.* 1*d.* This at once suggested Home Missions—

"Can't give to one without the other," said Bill, as he pencilled a fifth entry, and arranged for another 1*s*. 1*d*.

There followed a more prolonged pause than ever, and the pencil could scarcely bear the more vigorous application of the teeth, when Bill remembered that the parson at Tattingham collected for the Bible Society, and called now and then for a trifle. So down went another penny a week and at the end of another crooked line there appeared another 1*s*. 1*d*. *a quarter*. Four and fourpence a year. Perhaps if Bill had known it, he would scarcely have been so "owdacious," for the squire who owned the parish could only afford five shillings a year.

And now what else was there? The pencil wouldn't stand the much more severe attack from those sharp teeth—and yet here he could think of nothing more, and had a good deal over a pound to get rid of every quarter. Then came a resolution to take a pew in Tattingham Chapel, thinking that he could afford to be comfortable. It was with a positive relief that he wrote down that "*four shillin' a quarter.*"

Then adding it up once more Bill was annoyed, almost angry, to find that it only came to twenty shillings and sevenpence. Then the good wife came to his relief.

"I am fairly muddled, and can't match it no

how," said Bill scratching his head with one hand, and holding out the paper.

"Can't you see your way to save as much as you wanted," she said, looking over his shoulder at the figures.

"Nay—it's just the other way about that beats me—I can't find things enough to give to. We 're too rich, too rich, missis."

"Ah! you've forgotten the children," said the wife, as she ran quickly over Bill's figures—three of them for schooling, that's two-pence a week, that's six shillings and sixpence a quarter."

Bill shook his head doubtfully—"Nay, dear, I don't think that'll do. You see it's a tenth for the Lord, and I might as well put down their clothin' an' food to His account as their education."

"Well, but there's the club, can't you put that in?" said the wife, anxious to help her husband.

"Nay, wife, that won't do either," said Bill. "You see if I begin to bring myself in at all, I might come in for it all."

At last husband and wife gave in. "There it is," said Bill, eighteen shillin' and five pence for the Lord whenever He wants it. He knows it's there and He'll send somebody to fetch it, for He knows a good many who need it."

So Bill put up his pencil and paper. "I'll never believe anybody again, as long as I live, when they

say they can't afford to give. They can afford sixpence a day in beer and tobacco very often, and they can go foolin' away their money in a score of ways. There's only one reason why folks can't afford to give, and that is because they afford so much for everything else. Why if a man would put by sixpence a week he'd be able to give six times as much as he does very likely—and he'd be able to do it as the Book says, not grudgingly or of necessity but like a cheerful giver that the Lord loves."

CHAPTER XI.

A Homily of Mister Horn's.

HE had thought about it, prayed about it, and half resolved to do it for a long time. At last one day the resolution leaped forth full grown with a very decided *"I'll do it,"* and the ash stick came down with an equally vigorous *Amen.*

Mister Horn would preach a sermon all about giving.

How it came about was on this wise.

It was in the autumn as Mister Horn went through the woods of which he had the manage-

ment. He had been marking trees for the woodman's axe—a work full of varied suggestion to his quick mind. The day was one of those October days, most beautiful of all the year, in which autumn, sinking beneath the touch of winter, arrays herself in her loveliness, and takes the last lingering look at her own beauty—days in which the fell destroyer seems stayed and charmed and smitten with love to his victim. The sunshine lit up the red gold of the foliage and crept between the scantier leaves upon the mossy branches and down to briared nooks, while here and there a leaf came fluttering to the leafy path below. The robin tried with brave music to wake the dead summer, and stopped often, as if listening and wondering that there was no answer. The stillness, the loneliness, the "seriousness," of all about him found in Mister Horn a ready heart for the sermon they preached. At length he paused in front of a withered tree. The leafless branches rose up naked and black against the blue sky, the trunk ran down bare and black to the earth; no moss grew about it, no nests hung in it telling of generous shelter to the fowls of the air, no withered leaves lay heaped around it, a bank of golden blessings. Mister Horn took the chalk from his pocket, muttering—"Not that it's any good to anybody, but it'll be out o' the way." He stood for a moment looking up at it. Beyond

there stretched branches of other trees, vigorous and beautiful; on every hand was life. He nodded his head and tightened his lips—"That's it," he said to himself, "that's it all the world over; keep all, loose all; give all, save all; trees and men—it's all one. The life that has gone out in doing good, look at it coming back here in these leaves, to lie with warmth and life around them through the winter—but you, old friend, who kept it all to yourself, will get nothing back. You've kept your life to yourself, and now you're no good as tree or as timber. Cut it down—" and the chalk lines doomed it to speedy destruction.

As Mister Horn went on his way the dead tree became a text out of which sprang a multitude of similies and illustrations—a swarm of thoughts came and lodged in the branches thereof, diverse and manifold, but all leading to one conclusion. "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

At last these feelings and thoughts and figures gathered themselves together in the resolution, "*I'll do it.*" Then Mister Horn had pledged himself to a homily on giving.

One Sunday morning, about a fortnight after, the sermon was launched in Tattingham chapel.

The text was a harder matter with Mister Horn

than the sermon, for thoughts had been collected so long that a text was rather a centre of attraction about which they gathered than a seed out of which the thoughts grew, and it was difficult to find which they fitted best. It was perhaps rather because he must choose one, than that it was the best, that he took Ecclesiastes v. 13.

"*There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.*"

"Now, my dear friends, I am going to try and say something about money.

"'Preach the Gospel and let money alone,' does somebody say? Preach the Gospel I will by the Lord's help, and because it is the Gospel it won't let money alone. The Gospel has a good deal more to do with our money than perhaps most of us would care to know.

"Now money—for all it's a very good thing in its place—is the most hurtful of all things if a man don't see to it and manage it right. The Bible is full of how men have been hurt by money; and the only scene in which we hear a wretched creature crying in hell is in the story of a rich man whose one sin was that he had his good things in this life. Money may hurt men in three ways.

"First, *it may hurt men in the way they try to get it.*

"Everybody ought to begin there. Let them see to it that *that* is all right. I've known folks to go into some businesses for the sake of the money, and think they wouldn't get any hurt. They might as well step gently off the church tower and expect to come down all right. When I used to be sinkin' wells, I always lowered a candle before I went down myself—if the candle burned all steady, I knew I could go down, but if the candle flickered and went out, I knew that wouldn't do for me. Let a man let down the candle o' the Lord *first*, and if that'll burn, the man won't hurt. But that candle is choked out if a man will keep a public house and get all kind o' company and all sorts o' talk and all sorts o' mischief brewin'—that air will put out religion and soul and all. Or if people will go where they have to act lies, and to measure lies, and to shuffle and dodge and do underhand things, that will choke all that's good in them. They say they *must* live somehow. I heard tell once about a lot of hungry people in Germany, who, in a time o' want, were going to break into some corn-mills, when Luther met them and asked them what they were doing. Then up comes a stout fellow, and quoth he, 'Master Luther, we *must* live.' 'Live,' thundered Luther, 'why must ye live? I only know *one* must. *I know that we must be honest.*'

"But it's so hard to keep money from hurtin' us

that even in good and lawful callings men very often hurt themselves. When a man will work so hard and so long that he can only yawn over his Bible for a few moments, and then fall asleep on his knees and call it his 'prayers'—that man is sufferin' from a deadly hurt. Woe, woe to them who have in business set their hearts upon money, and make haste to be rich! It's the week-night service, or the man's class night: 'Ho, Friend, are you coming with us?' Bless you, no! he's off, so very busy, so much to do—he must make haste to be rich. Ah, if he could stay long enough he might see the sorrowful eyes of Jesus following him with a tender pity, he might hear the words sadly spoken of him—*Alas! 'how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!'*

"Ay, and there is worse hurt than this, though this is bad enough. When a man gets it by grinding down them that work for him,—that's a gain that will hurt the owner thereof for ever and ever. The profit that's got by beating down the fair price of things, and by wringing hard bargains—why the miserable priests and scribes who had egged on Judas and prompted him to his accursed work wouldn't touch *blood money*—the pieces might perish with him! Touch it! I wouldn't touch it with a pair of tongs a mile long. I saw one day by the roadside a well where, in old time, when that

parish had the plague, the people put the money for the provisions that were brought to them—the water cleansed the coins. But there is money—gold and silver and pence—that has the curse of shortened lives upon it, the curse of ruined health, of poor little starved children, of injured women, of wronged widows, and worst of all, of lost souls—*the sea itself couldn't wash it clean!* Like the foolish stories we heard when we were little, about how wise magicians could rub a coin and call up all kinds of visions, there are coins to-day that when you touch them ought to conjure up a crowd of folks underfed and overworked. Folks all hollow-eyed, with white, hungry faces, and long, bony fingers that point at men and curse them. They shall have their turn some day. God is slow but God is sure, and His book has it, '*Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire . . . which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries . . . . are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.*' Take good heed how ye get money.

"SECONDLY, *Money may hurt men by the way they spend it.*

"If the owner thereof spends it all in luxury and self-indulgence, that is a hurt that he may perhaps never get over.

"Nothing in God's Book is more dreadful or more startling than the story of the man who had got enough to buy all dainty dishes, and unheard-of wines. Plenty to eat and nothing to do—why, what more could anybody want? Ah! he found out what more a man wants before the next day dawned. For the sentence had gone out, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' He was dead, and left his barns to some third cousin whom he knew nothing about—dead, and could not take a farthing of it all with him—dead and buried, and the Lord wrote the epitaph:—'*So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*'

"And see ye, my friends, ye don't need bürstin' barns and much goods laid up before you get hurt this way. In the woods I've come across the adders, and I know that if the big ones want most killin' the little ones carry poisoned tongues. A man can let ten shillin' a-week bite him like a serpent. I'd rather that you should find this old frame of mine in the rags of a tramp, starved to death in a ditch, than have money hurt me as some in this parish let a week's wages hurt 'em. In all the world's hurts and harms the worst is to see a man staggering home drunk, cursing his Maker, going home mad enough to do anything that's cruel and deviliah.

"Then there's the hurt o'spending money too *fast* —quite a plague in these times. The men must be counted gentlefolks, and the women must look never so smart—till somebody must go short. When the money's done the bills come in, and then,—'Preach the Gospel!' Ay, my friends, it's about time somebody did, for the Gospel says, Owe no man anything. It says, Provide things honest. It says, Do to others as ye would be done by. The Gospel! It's the Gospel for the day and the Epistle too—*Pay your twenty shillings in the pound.*

"There was a good prayer I knew a man to offer once,—a very good prayer. A brother was praying with much noise for faith—soul-saving faith, sin-killing faith, devil-driving faith. There was a quiet friend near him, to whom the noisy brother owed a long bill,—'Amen,' said the quiet friend; 'Amen, and give us *debt-paying* faith too.' My friends, we want that faith now-a-days. People don't believe in a religion that doesn't do that. And they may well not believe in it, for he that doesn't do his duty to his brother, whom he hath seen, how will he do his duty to his God, Whom he hath not seen Take good heed how ye spend money.

"*The third way that money may hurt the owners thereof is the way they keep it.*

"The rich fool is better one way than the miser. He did get something out of his money. The miser

turns everything into money and gets nothing out of it. The rich man fared sumptuously every day, and was clothed in purple and fine linen; as Father Abraham told him, he had his good things in his lifetime. But the miser, who grudges himself the mouldy crust that he eats, is a Lazarus in this world and a Dives in the next; he has his evil things both ways. However, there isn't much to choose between them, the spendthrift and the miser—*they both keep all their money for their own selves*, and that is keeping it to their hurt. Hurt indeed! No poor slave ever had such a hard time as money will lead a man if once it gets the upper hand of anybody. To see a man that God made in His own image and likeness sink down lean, shrivelled, and yellow, careless of hunger and cold, of darkness and filth, if his old withered hand can but clutch the money-bag; goodness and heaven, his God and his neighbour, his body and soul, all bargained away for a little bit more of his darling money—that's money kept to the hurt of the owner thereof. Yet it is almost as bad to see one who has been a simple, godly fellow getting rich, and as the money comes to see him growing careless and dead, slowly swelling himself out with conceit, until he is too full of himself to hold anything else, and money is more to him than all beside, —God or neighbour, heaven or hell. Then, too, the miser does hide himself in his dingy corner,

buried, earth to earth; but the rich fools come swaggering into the sunshine, putting 'the old man' into everybody by their high and mighty manners. There isn't much to choose between 'em, the miser and the fool. In both cases money is kept to the hurt of the owners thereof.

"There's many a man who has got his money by honest, hard work, and had as much right to it as anybody could have, and who has spent it harmlessly enough, yet his money has become an eternal curse. He didn't manage it right when he got it. It is like that story in Paul's travels where the Barbarians showed them no little kindness. The shivering, drenched company gathered round the fire, but out o' the same ruddy flame crept a viper that fastened on Paul's arm, a 'venomous beast.' Ah! out o' men's luxuries and comforts creeps the old serpent—indolence, forgetfulness of God, self-indulgence, pride; and it has coiled round and round till you see them fall down dead in soul and spirit, unless they have the pluck to shake it off into the fire by the Lord's help, and to stand forth among the heathen as men of God.

"Now the first thing is for a man to *think about managing it.*

"Money is like everything else; it don't do to be left to itself. 'A child left to itself bringeth its mother to shame,' saith the wise man. A garden

left to itself bringeth its owner to weeds, and a colt left to itself bringeth its master to the ground. Everything must be taken hold of the right way, and managed. And the right way to manage money *is to give rightly*. But *how many of us ever thought about giving,*—how much we ought to give away in the year, and what we ought to give to? We think about getting—that's very certain. And we think about spending too—but as to *giving*—well, when you've had to give you've given; when the box has come round, and you didn't like to give a nod, you've put something in, you didn't think of it beforehand or after. If you want to keep money from hurting you, you must think *as much about givin' as gettin'*. That's a very plain direction in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: '*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.*' That was before the collection. They weren't to come to the service and give anything that they might happen to have about them (if it were only little enough), nor to nudge their neighbour and trouble him for the loan of a threepenny bit, nor to bow to the plate as if politeness would build a chapel, or pay for a missionary. *They were once a week to think, 'how much ought I to give?'* and they were to put that by. What a blessing it would be to us here in Tattingham if we tried that plan! We shouldn't have the devil trippin' up souls

with that straw—for most of us are little babes in Christ, easily upset—which keeps you away from class for weeks together: 'You haven't paid your class-money, and it's so many weeks that you're ashamed to go and not pay. Stay home to-night.' And so the devil has made many a poor backslider just out of that. There would be the money put by for that, ready and waitin', if people would do as their Bible says. Think about it, and arrange for it as the Lord has prospered you. And if you want to know how much the Lord has prospered you, ask yourself how much you've got that God could take away. So then, if you don't want money to hurt you, *think about giving, and arrange for it.*

"There is a good old saying, 'riches take to themselves wings and *fly* away, and he who would keep 'em must clip their wings by givin';' but that is only half the truth. Money is like the fiery little Bantam cocks that fly at everybody with spur and bill; men must clip their wings not only that they ma'n't fly away, but also that they ma'n't *fly at them.* People make a great mistake who think of charity in a one-sided way. It isn't only to relieve the poor, but to keep money from hurtin' the owners thereof, and the greatest curse that could come upon men would be to have all rich and no poor. It's a blessing for the rich that truth of our Saviour's, 'The poor ye have always

with you.' Folks often excuse themselves, saying they can't afford to give, but if they saw things in a truer light they'd say that they *couldn't afford to keep*. Look at that story of the good Samaritan, of whom Jesus says to us, 'Go and do thou likewise.' Excuses! why that Samaritan might have made them by the score. He might have thought as you do when you see any wretched object, 'Ah, if this fellow had been sober and industrious, depend upon it he wouldn't have come to this. Besides, he has no claim upon me, and why should he expect me to trouble myself about him. Then again, these fellows are so ungrateful, one may kill oneself over 'em, and never get a single thank-ye. And if I begin to help there's no knowing where it'll end—he'll want oil and wine, and they're expensive things, and I shall have none for myself. I shall have to lift him up on my mule and trudge alongside—roads are rough and I'm a bad walker. If I take him to the Inn there's twopence gone at once! And what with my staying about minding him my day will be wasted and night will overtake me, and that's not a pleasant thing in a place that swarms with robbers.' So he might have said, and comin' nearer, still undecided, he catches sight of the Jewish features. That might have crowned the excuses, and the Samaritan might have gone off muttering something about riding to the next village and

telling them of it, and they might do as they would.

"But he got off and gave the poor fellow oil and wine, and tore strips off his own robes to dress the wounds, he led him gently on the mule, he paid his bill at the Inn, he rode home along the dangerous road—yet I tell you that poor man who had fallen among thieves gave back as much as he got. Self-denial is a more heavenly thing than a little oil and wine; the blessed sense of having done one's duty is cheaply bought for twopence and a lift on the mule; that joy, like Heaven in its depth and all unsullied purity, that springs from a good deed well done, is a bargain if a man sells all that he has to buy it. To think about giving and to fairly arrange to do it is the first thing.

"*To give as much as you can* is the second thing.

"Now you all agree with that, I know, whatever you think of what I have said already, or what I am going to say. Everybody shakes his head very piously, 'O, yes, we all ought to give as much as we can;' and one would think that we were a set of angels if he didn't do more than listen to us.

"This man has sixteen shillings a week, and he gives as much as he can. 'There's rent, you know, and rates—and they are heavy in this parish; and there's food, and times are hard now; and there's

children, and clothing, and the club. I should like to know what I can give out of that.' So he gives as much as he can—and that is *nothing*.

"Here is another man, getting his thirty shillings a week. He gives as much as he can, certainly. He can't make ends meet on that. He is in debt to everybody—the publican first, and then of course to everybody else. Tell me whose name is chalked down on the door of 'The Green Man,' and I'll tell you who owes money to the grocer and butcher and baker and doctor, and by-and-bye to every rate-payer in the parish; for if he doesn't want them to keep him in the workhouse, they'll have to find him a grave and to bury him in it. He, too, thinks he gives as much as he can, and he gives *nothing*.

"But here is a gentleman with his five pounds a week. 'Now,' says sixteen shillings a week, 'you'll get something there.' 'That's the place to go to,' says thirty shillings a week, 'he's a rich man.' 'Well, Sir, you think everybody ought to give as much as he can?' 'Of course,' says he, 'of course, Mister Horn, we all ought to do that, you know. But—em—you see a man in my position has so many claims, and he has to keep up appearances, you know, and he must mix a little with society—a *little*, you know, for the sake of the children.' And—em—well, he gives as much as he can, and he gives *nothing*—that is if he can help

it, for sometimes a good customer asks him for a subscription, and his business is obliged to afford what his religion wouldn't.

"But now we shall be rewarded. This is a rich man here. Bless you, he's worth *five hundred a year*—ten pound a week. What a pretty place he has. 'Ah,' says sixteen shillings, 'now if I were only like him, what I would do then!' 'To be sure,' says thirty shillings, 'wasting his time on us when he can get all that he wants there.' 'He can afford it,' says two hundred a year. So we come before him. Here he is, walking around his garden. 'What a pretty place you've got here Sir.' 'Yes; it costs me a good deal to keep it up, you know. These things always want looking after.' 'This your dog, Sir? a handsome fellow.' 'He ought to be; he cost enough, and it takes a round sum in the year to feed him. But walk in, and have a glass of wine; I've got some nice old port.' 'No, Sir, excuse me, please. I just called to ask you a question. I have been talking to some folks in the village, and their opinion is that everybody ought to give as much as he can. May I ask you what you think?' 'Certainly, certainly; that's right enough. Everybody ought to give as much as he can. My own case is peculiar, you know. My expenses are so numerous, and there are so many claims, and so much of my income has

to go into the business that I cannot do what I should like to, though I give what I can.' Of course, and so he gives nothing too. (Then Mister Horn's voice grew sad and solemn in its tones.) And all the time there stands by us the Blessed Lord Who gives us strength and sense to get our living; Who gives us the food we eat and the clothes we wear. There He stands with bleeding feet and pierced hands, and His brow torn with the crown of thorns. *He was rich, and for our sakes became poor He laid down His life for us.* And now He sees us griping and grasping our all, afraid of our lives lest He should get a farthing of it! O, it is enough to make the angels weep—they who cast their crowns before Him. And the time is coming when we shall weep about it too, and no hand shall wipe our tears away. The Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, and He shall say: 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in.' . . . . 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to ME.' Cast him into the outer darkness—a proper place for a black sin like that! A man for whom the Son of God died, to live heaping himself up with food and clothes,

spending everything on his house—perhaps on his dog and his horse—and for the blessed Lord and Giver of it all—*nothing*, or only a mockery that is worse than nothing!

But after all *how much one ought to give* is a matter that every man must settle for himself. In this matter we are not under the law but under grace. But let a man see to it that grace doesn't get less out of him than the law could get out of a Jew. Surely the son of the bondwoman is not going to be more generous than the son of the free. He is heir to all his Father's estate, Isaac the child of laughter, and surely he will do greater things than the poor wanderer in the desert. Yet under the law the servant gave a tenth, besides what the sacrifices and gifts and offerings cost, and that was not far short of another tenth. Love is a poor thing if it can't get more out of anybody than the law can. A son is hardly worth the name if he doesn't give a better service than a slave. I think that every man who calls himself a Christian is bound to sit down and think about it carefully, aye, and kneel down too and pray about it, not only look here and there and see what somebody else does. Let him honestly count up what other things cost him, let him count up how much he owes to his Lord for the preaching of the Word, and for the means of grace, for the blessed

Word, and the hope of Heaven. Then let him settle what he can give, and stick to it, telling the Master what he has done, and asking His help and blessing; for without His help we shall soon slip back again into the old careless ways.

"And besides that if a man really loves his Lord at all, he will not only think how much he can give—he will think of this too, *how much he can save that he may give.* He will deny himself, and take up his cross, that he may be what the Lord Jesus calls 'rich toward God.' If a man doesn't love with a *giving* love, he'd better hold his tongue about it. There is one kind o' love that John tells us not to have, and it's a'most the only kind o' love that's forbidden—*Let us not love in word, neither in tongue.* You know how God loves: *God so loved that He gave.* That is His love, and we don't know much about it if we don't love with a love that loves to give. Come, wake up, thou Little-heart, and count up what He has given thee. How much owest thou unto thy Lord? When you had spent all, and were perishing with hunger, He ran and fell on your neck and kissed you. He brought you home, and gave you the best robe, and the ring for the finger and the shoes for the feet. He had the fatted calf killed for your merry-making. Has He not sent His angels to hold you up in their hands; and for you and for me God gave His only-

begotten Son! And yonder there are the pearly gates, opened for us, and the streets of pure gold, and the fulness of blessing for ever and ever. O, canst thou be greedy to such a Giver?

"*To give with the right spirit is the third thing.*—Not to let a poor relation starve because you want to look fine at the top of a subscription list. Thy money perish with thee if thou canst play the Pharisee like that!—thou and thy giving art like to go to perdition. And not to give either because somebody else is giving and it won't do for you to be behind them—people would notice it. Yes, and there is One who notices such giving as that and He won't take it as done unto Him. Remember what the book says *not grudgingly or of necessity.*

"*Grudgingly!* Why there are some folks, I'd as soon kick a bee-hive over as ask them for sixpence for the Master. You'll set 'em a-going at once, buzzin' and stingin', and then stop them if you can. They'll give you all the sorrows and misfortunes of their lives, from their teethin' upwards, till you'd think that nobody ever was so unfortunate. Poor creatures, twenty years agone didn't some man die a half-a-sovereign in their debt, and he hasn't paid 'em since, and he professed to be a religious man too! And there was old Mr. So-and-so, they *did* think that he would have remembered them in his will—but there what

could you expect with such a set about the old man? You'll hear all their grumblings and growlings against everybody in the Church and out of it, all the faults and failin's of the whole parish. And after that, very likely they will ask you to call again for the sixpence because they must think about it. And when you do call again they'll have found out some new reason for not giving anything; or else they'll bring you a threepenny-bit, with a great sigh as if they were parting with their first-born. *The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.* And no wonder either, for 'tis one o' the prettiest sights, and in these parts one o' the rarest too.

"Now, my friends, I've about done, for I can't either preach, or listen, to long sermons. If once in your life-time you've been stirred up to think about this matter of giving I am thankful. And the Lord help us to see our duty and help us to do it. There's plenty of work for thee to do with thy money, hast thou much or little.

"Eh, my friends! when I think of this poor, poor world, think of the hungry little children, think of the homes stript bare by want, and of them inside that are ready to perish with hunger, ay and of them that are hungry and are homeless too—when I think of the sufferers that are dyin' for want of money to buy the skill and medicine that could save them—and think of the dark souls whose lamps are

gone out, and know that money would buy oil for their lamps, the Bibles it would buy and the missionaries it would send—then money seems to me like an angel of God troublin' the waters to heal poor sick folk, comin' to forlorn mothers in the wilderness and caring for the children, and seemin' to say, 'Fear not, Hagar, the Lord hath heard the voice of the child.' An angel that lifts the poor Lazarus up out of his misery into such blessing and tender service that it is like heaven to him; that meets the penitent outcasts, and putting them in the way of an honest living, saith, 'Go in peace and sin no more;' ay, like Him Whom the angels worship, it *can go about doing good.* Then I think of how men scrape and hoard it till I have wept at the picture that has risen before me, as if the angel were chained and fettered, like Peter in prison, and hosts in the perishing city are crying to God that it may be loosed and come to them before they die. Ay, I've wept as I've thought how often it is a fallen angel—the white robes flung off, and I've seen it come forth with a harlot's gauds and paint, spending herself in noisy riot, corrupting and cursing, she that could have been a white-handed angel of God.

"Yes, money, if we use it right, may be a strong right arm in God's great world, to help, to defend, to uplift, and to save. But use it wrongly, and it

is a strong arm still, to injure, to curse, and to destroy—whose evil deeds shall return and gather with a ten-fold greater hurt upon the owner thereof."

CHAPTER XII.

A Gain in Grief.

WHILST Mister Horn's homily was not received very heartily by two or three "members of Society," it bore good fruit for all that. Perhaps the sermons that are most liked may sometimes do least good; at any rate Mister Horn always took it as a good sign when the grumblers and faulty ones were louder than usual in their speaking out. "Depend upon it, if you pinch the devil a bit hard, he'll squeak"—was Mr. Horn's explanation, "and I never think that 'tis all right, unless I can get a

poke at him somehow." The village shopkeeper had a visit from more than one grumbler, during the next week, who growled but paid something toward a long-neglected account.

The result on James Niggardly, Esquire, was singularly amusing. You might have supposed that he was a champion ready to die for the injured "gospel" that he talked so much about. He declared that he would hear Mister Horn no more. He didn't think that the House of God was a place in which every one was to be made uncomfortable, *that* he didn't. It was a place where men and women went for rest and comfort. He would tell Mister Horn so when he saw him. And he did.

"Pre—cise—ly" said Mister Horn, very slowly, and screwing up his lips—"pre—cise—ly. But then it depends upon the *kind* o' men and women you know, Jim, al—to—gether"—(and he brought down his ash-stick with each syllable). "The Blessed Master made the House of God a *very* uncomfortable place to some folks, you know, Jim—and He is a good example for us to follow. People who cared more about getting than about giving, were *very* uncomfortable when He made a scourge o' small cords and drove them out: when He upset the tables and sent the money rolling over the floor, and drove out the sheep and oxen, and turned out the dove sellers. I dare say they were very

angry and talked about the House of God being a place where folks ought to feel very easy and comfortable! But then we are told that the blind and the lame came to Him, and He *healed them*. He made *them* feel very comfortable indeed. You see it depends, Jim—depends on the kind o' men and women, al—to—gether." And once more the ash-stick came down with an emphatic confirmation of its master's opinion. "The Word is like salt, Jim,—'tis sweet and savoury to folks who are sound and right; but folks with chaps and cracks in their religion will feel it smarting and stinging perhaps more than they care for."

Little did any think that within a week of that Sunday morning Mister Horn's sermon would come to the mind of one of the hearers with a new meaning and a force as if every word of it had been on fire, and had burnt its way right to his heart. That one was James Niggardly himself.

Of the three daughters at Stukeville, the youngest was Marian, a little bright-eyed, bright-haired, laughing maiden of eight summers. She wore sunshine always, and wherever she stepped came gladness and happiness like the joy that greets the sun in early spring.

All day long her sweet voice was heard singing through the house or roaming in the garden, and wherever it reached James Niggardly's ears it

seemed to wake up something of the old better self that lay sleeping within. Everybody loved her, they couldn't help themselves about that. But her father's devotion was more than love,—she was his idol. And marvellous was the power she had with him. The hard, stern, selfish Jim Niggardly found nothing a trouble that little Marian asked, and nothing was a sacrifice that could please her, whatever it might be. Why you might have come upon him amidst ledger and day-book, sitting there at his office desk,—he, the great James Niggardly, Esquire, with little Marian at his side making all his busy world stand still, whilst he bent over the troublesome work of mending her broken doll. If ever his voice regained its old ring and the cheeriness of former days, it was as little Marian ran for a romp. If anything brought back the simple, kindly Jim Niggardly that used to be, it was as he yielded to some request of his little maiden's.

As is so often the case with children who die young, she was full of an old-fashioned religiousness —very simple, yet so constant and so real that it seemed the growth of years. Does not Heaven mature the spiritual in such, and make these little ones who are going to join the saints in light, meet for their inheritance?

One day when she was not yet four years of age, her father was lying in a darkened room suffering

from some temporary indisposition. The silence was disturbed by a very gentle knock at the door, followed at once by the intrusion of a sunny face and sunny hair, and a little voice asked plaintively, "May I come in?" And Marian crept over and sat down beside the sofa.

"Papa," she whispered, "if it won't hurt you I am come to read to you." Quite unable to read, she opened a book she brought with her, and, as if reading, she repeated with exquisite simplicity these words that she had learned:—

"And they brought young children to Jesus that he should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, and put His hands upon them, and blessed them."

Then she closed the book and kissed him very gently, whispering, "Good-bye, papa; I hope that will do you good. I have asked Jesus to make you better, and He will, I know." And she left him in tears.

Little Marian's love to Jesus was not only an

devotion for Him Who had long ago lived a life of yearning pity, and Who had died for all men on the cross; nor was it only the thought of the glorious King Who hears and helps us when we cry unto Him. It was the devotion of her whole being to One who was to her a constant Presence and a personal Friend. There was not a thought, not a feeling, about anything, that she did not share with Him. Her toys, her dresses, her opinions of people, all the little incidents that made up each day of her life, were talked of to Him with a simplicity and confidence that realised Him as, "the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The little maiden loved Him with all her heart, and could keep nothing from Him.

With Mister Horn she was a great favourite, and many a visit was paid for an hour's talk in the garden with Marian. To him perhaps she owed much of the intense love that she felt for the Saviour, for he, more than any other, had told her of Him. She had learned his favourite text when she was very little, and all the thoughts and motives of her life were shaped and coloured by it.

"Mamma," she often said, "can you tell how it is that Jesus should care so much for *me*, and love *me!* Isn't it wonderful, Mamma. He gave Himself for me. I do love Him for it, *very, very, very* much. Don't you, Mamma?" Sometimes she stood quietly

by the window, wrapped in some deep thought, and then looking up, she would say—"O, Mamma, I do love Jesus so—I want to give Him *everything;* you and papa, and all of us, and Mister Horn, and all that I've got; and the sun and the flowers, and everything there is. You know He gave Himself for me."

Without any formal resolution on her part, she instinctively came to look upon all her money as belonging to her dearest Friend. It was perhaps the only thing that she had absolutely in her own disposal, and so she naturally gave it to Him to whom she was so devoted. A money-box was the treasury of her little offerings and of her possessions nothing was more prized than this. To her mind Jesus was still standing watching the gifts that came into the treasury. One day her father thought the sum too large to be given all at once, and hinted as much. Little Marian looked up in wonder and said, "I must put it all in, you know, Papa, or else Jesus wont be able to look at me with a smile, and say, '*She did cast in all that she had.*'"

She had not been well for two or three days previous to the Sunday of Mister Horn's sermon. On the Monday she got much worse, and all were alarmed. For two weary days all was hopeless, and before the week was over it was plain that the end was approaching. Her father could not leave her—

day and night he remained at her side. His love grew jealous at the thought of losing her. He was jealous of those to whom she spoke a word; jealous of every look that wandered from him; impatient that any other should minister to her wants but himself.

Propped up on the pillows, she lay with flushed face, the thin white fingers resting upon her little money-box—an angel already in purity and celestial beauty. As the breath grew quicker her lips moved. All leaned to catch her words; her father stooped over her most greedy for every sacred sound. She whispered, "He is coming now! Dear Jesus!" And the eyes were fixed as a smile lit up all her face. "I am coming . . . Now I shall be able to tell Jesus how much I love Him; and that Mamma loves Him, and sisters, and you, Papa, and Mister Horn."

The voice grew fainter; slowly and scarcely audible the lips moved again, "Now I can't give Him my money any more. Please, Papa—do—it—" The head fell upon the father's shoulder, the soft bright hair hung over his arm, and little Marian was with Jesus.

That night James Niggardly sat vacantly staring into the fire, numbed with grief to the very bone. All was dark, accursed and utterly forsaken. At first a wild rebellion filled his soul, but the storm

had spent itself in a flood of tears. And now he could scarcely resist the memories of little Marian that began to crowd in upon him, memories that at first he had flung forth angrily as unbearable. Soon they seemed almost to quiet and soothe him. Amongst the visions there rose one more distinct, more impressed than any other, it was of her coming in four years before when he was lying in this very room. He almost heard her gentle voice go through the words again: "*Jesus said, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*" Again he heard her voice, saying it as if it were a prayer more than a wish, "I hope that will do you good."

A prayer it was, a prayer answered that night as James Niggardly fell on his knees and poured out his soul to God.

"As a little child, as my own little Marian, as Thine own, O Lord, help me to receive Thy kingdom."

Bravely did he fight against the selfishness that had become habitual, nerved and inspired whenever he recalled the sacred words: "Please, Papa, do it for—"

Mister Horn was now a frequent visitor at Stukeville, and his prayers and counsels led James Niggardly back to the man he had been—further back than that, until he became humble and simple,

and received the kingdom of God as a little child.

* * * * *

It was twelve months after, on the anniversary of Marian's death, that they talked of the little maiden. James Niggardly stood leaning against the mantelpiece, as he held in his hand the money-box. "Ah, Mister Horn," said he, with tears of gratitude, "her death was my life, her loss saved me."

Many a generous deed was done, and many a noble gift was sent without any other explanation than this, which was written within :—

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